CONRAD WOOD

THE MOPLAH REBELLION AND ITS GENESIS

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Moplah rebellion (1921-22) of Malabar is a glorious chapter of anti-imperialist upsurge which swept India after the first world war. It broke out against the overall background of non-cooperation and khilafat movements which was sweeping India. Jallianwalabagh massacre (1919) placed the entire country face to face with the hard reality of organising total resistance against a diabolical force i.e. British imperialism. Post-war development in the near-east further exposed imperialist designs to Indian people, hindus and muslims. Non-cooperation and khilafat movement were India's response to this challenge. Moplah rebellion is also an important link in the chain of rural insurrections which had been sweeping India with the advent of the British. The culmination of opposition to the British was India's first war of independence (1857).

Malabar region was a part of the kingdom of Tippu Sultan of Mysore. Tippu's fight against the British had inspired millions of Indian people. The British defeated Tippu in 1799. The first Moplah insurrection took place in 1800-02. From 1836-1919, there occurred a number of incidents. The Moplah rebellion of 1921-22 was the most glorious.

The author, a British Marxist scholar, has argued in this work

(Continued on back flap)

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And
Its Genesis

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Conrad Wood

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Preface

This work is a modified version of my thesis 'The Moplah Rebellion of 1921-22 and Its Genesis' which was accepted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the University of London in 1975. I have made certain relatively minor alterations and additions to the text of the thesis, but the chief modification consists of a major pruning of the footnotes. Readers with a special interest in the source material used in the production of this work should therefore refer to the thesis for further information.

The source material has been collected from many different sources and includes official records (located at the India Office Library, London, unless otherwise stated), private papers, newspapers, memoirs, court proceedings, missionary reports and interviews. Most of the interviews were conducted in India in the period November 1974-May 1975 when I was collecting materials for my thesis in that country. The opportunity I had to visit the scene of the Moplah rebellion of 1921-22 and talk to men and women who lived through those events was most useful. However, the greater part of the primary material on which I have worked has, unavoidably, been that of British government servants. A largely illiterate population like the pre-1922 Ernad Moplahs leaves little written record of which the historian can make use. For an account of their history in this period the researcher must draw heavily on material produced by servants of the administration with which the Ernad Moplah so often found himself in conflict. I have attempted to ensure that this in-built bias in the source material should not vitiate the objectivity which has been my first concern. The reader must be the judge of the success, or otherwise, of this attempt.

My debts of gratitude incurred in the production of this work are many and I cannot mention here all my creditors by name. However I must record my thanks to Dr Z. H. Zaidi of the School of Oriental and African Studies who, in supervising my thesis work, provided judicious guidance. My work in India would have been much less fruitful but for the help of many friends. I should mention in particular Mr M. Gangadhara Menon, Mr M. Ishaq, Mr K. P. Sasidharan, Mr Kamal Pasha, Mr M. Ali Kunhi, Syed Hassan Jiffri, Prof M. P. Sridharan, Dr M. P. Sreekumaran Nair, Mr T. A. Majid, Dr C. K. Kareem, Prof T. K. Ravindran, Mr M. Kanaran and his staff and Miss Padmavarthy Sukumaran. I am also indebted to the governing body of the School of Oriental and African Studies and to the trustees of the Central Research Fund, London University, for financial support during the production of this work; to the staff of many libraries and archives in Britain and India for their cooperation; and to Mrs June Iris Wood whose contribution to the present work extended far beyond the typing work she ungrudgingly undertook.

London CONRAD WOOD
January 1987

Abbreviations

BM	British Museum, London
BPSP	Bombay Political and Secret Proceedings
BRP	Bombay Revenue Proceedings
CSAS	Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge
DW	Defence Witness
IOL	India Office Library, London
KDCA	Kozhikode (Calicut) District Court Archives
MBRP	Madras Board of Revenue Proceedings
MCWP	Madras Court of Wards Proceedings
MHCA	Madras High Court Archives
MJP	Madras Judicial Proceedings
MLP	Madras Legislative Proceedings
ML(G)P	Madras Law (General) Proceedings
MNNR	Madras Native Newspaper Reports
MPolP	Madras Political Proceedings
MPP	Madras Public Proceedings
MRO	Madras Record Office
MRP	Madras Revenue Proceedings
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
PRO	Public Record Office, London
PW	Prosecution Witness
RS, LR & A	Revenue Settlement, Land Records and Agriculture

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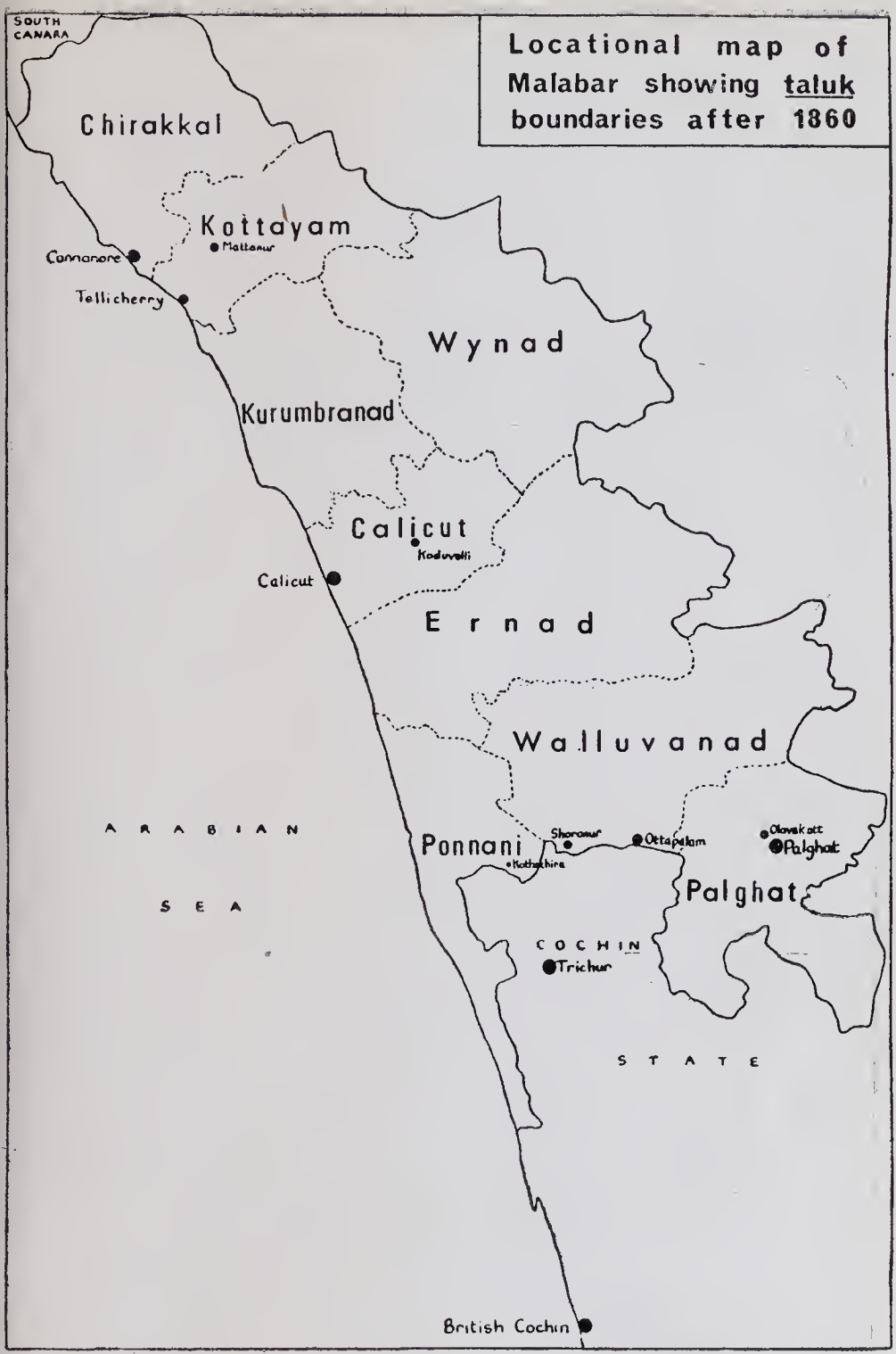
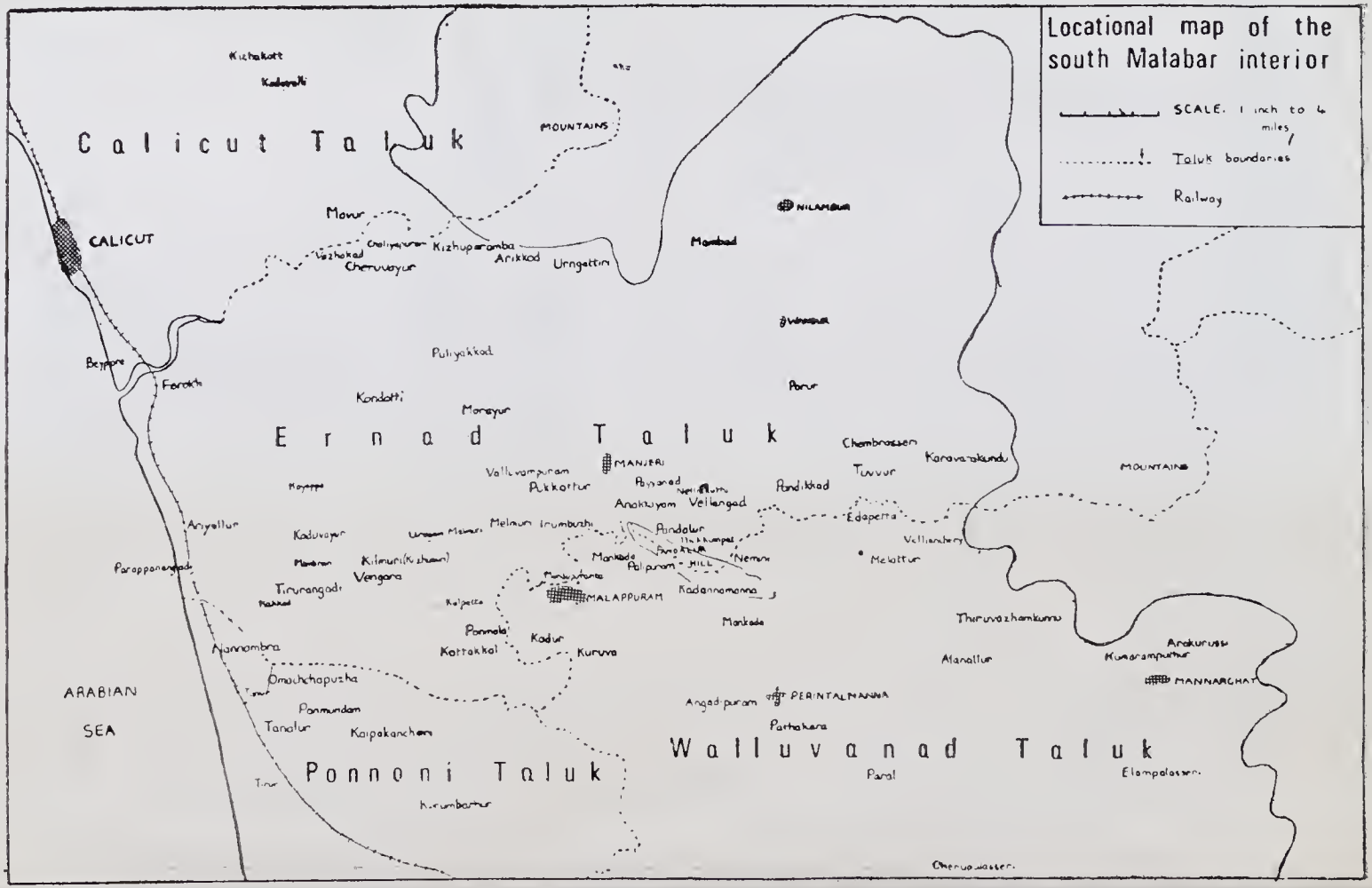

Locational map of Malabar showing taluk boundaries after 1860
SOUTH CANARA
Chirakkal
Kottayam
Mattanur
Cannanore
Tellicherry
Wynad
Kurumbranad
Calicut
Koduvalli
Calicut
Ernad
Walluvanad
ARABIAN
SEA
Ponnani
Shoranur
Ottapalam
Olavakott
Palghat
Kothachira
Palghat
COCHIN
Trichur
STATE
British Cochin


Locational map of the south Malabar interior
SCALE. 1 inch to 4 miles
Taluk boundaries
Railway
Calicut Taluk
Ernad Taluk
Ponnani Taluk
Walluvanad Taluk
CALICUT
MALAPPURAM
MANJERI
PERINTALMANNA
MANNARGHAT
NILAMBUR
MOUNTAINS
ARABIAN SEA
Kozhikode
Cheruvayur
Kizhuparamba
Arikkod
Urngattiri
Mambad
Puliyakkod
Kondotti
Manjeri
Porur
Chembrassen
Karuvarakundu
Tuvvur
Pandikkad
Vallikkunnu
Pulakottur
Anakkayam
Vellangad
Edapetta
Melattur
Anyellur
Kaduvayur
Kilmuri(Kizhmuri)
Vengara
Tirurangadi
Paraparanangadi
Pandalur
Nemini
Mankada
Pallipuram
Kadannamanna
Ponnola
Kottakkal
Kadur
Kuruva
Narukara
Thiruvazhamkunnu
Manalur
Arakurussi
Kunarampuzha
Angadipuram
Parthakara
Paral
Elampalassen
Cheruvassen
Tanalur
Kaipakanchery
Perumbadappu
Omachapuzha
Ponmundam

Introduction

In 1921-22 there was staged the most serious rebellion against British rule in India since the great Mutiny of 1857-58.[1] The "Moplah Rebellion" of 1921-22 was the work of part of the muslim community of Malabar, a community known as the 'Moplahs' or 'Mappillas'. For a period of several months, from August 1921 to early 1922, British administration was effectual only within range of the gun in an area of hundreds of square miles inhabited by a Moplah population of about 400,000.

The scene of this rebellion was the southern part of the Malabar district of the Madras Presidency. Today the area in which the rebellion occurred is located in Kerala in south-west India. The state of Kerala is the state of the Malayalis, those who speak the Dravidian tongue Malayalam. Under British rule, the homeland of the Malayalis comprised three main political divisions. The southern division, Travancore, and the central division, Cochin, were both "Native States" ruled, under British supervision, by Indian princes. The northern area of Malayalam speakers was governed directly by the British as the Malabar district of the Madras Presidency.

Malabar district consisted of a strip of territory, no more than seventy miles across, stretching from north to south along the coast of the Arabian Sea for a distance of 150 miles. On its inland margin, Malabar was fairly effectively sealed from the non-Malayali areas to the east by the sparsely populated Western Ghats. This steep mountain wall was negotiable in only a few places, and broken only by the Palghat Gap in the south-east of the district. One part of Malabar consisted of plateau land to the east of the

1 Percival Griffiths, **To Guard My People: The History of the Indian Police**, p 294.

Ghats. This was the **taluk** (an administrative division of a 'district') of Wynad which was quite distinct in nearly every respect from the rest of the district. Malabar proper, except for a narrow, sandy strip along the coast, was a terrain much broken by hills and valleys. Heavy monsoon rainfall permitted the cultivation of the low-lying parts as paddy flats. The intervening hills, as well as the sandy coastal strip, were used mainly for the cultivation of fruit trees, of which the coconut palm was the most important. This interpenetration of paddy field and coconut grove was typical of the whole of Malabar, except Wynad. However, south Malabar, roughly corresponding to the **taluks** of Ernad, Walluvanad, Ponnani and Palghat, was different from north Malabar (Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad and Calicut **taluks**) in an important respect. In the north, where the Ghats approached closer to the sea, grain cultivation generally took second place to plantation crops whilst in the south the reverse was the case. The **taluk** in which grain cultivation was most dominant was Palghat where the hills were lower and the valleys less entrenched than in the rest of the Malabar interior. In many respects Palghat, with easy access to the Tamil lands beyond the Ghats, was, in a number of different respects, a transitional country between the eastern and western sides of the Madras Presidency. Not only was the rainfall considerably lower than the Malabar average, but also the population contained a considerable proportion of Tamils.

Although fishing was important along the coast, the economy of Malabar was based massively on the products of the soil. European enterprise had been responsible for the introduction of plantation crops, such as tea and coffee, on the Wynad plateau. In the country below the Ghats the products were far more traditional. The slopes of the Ghats, and certain rather remote inland areas, such as around Nilambur in north-eastern Ernad, were the scene of a timber-cutting industry of considerable importance. By far the most important part of the economy, however, was the cultivation of grain and fruit crops on the lower lands to

the west. On this production depended the other main aspects of Malabar's economy—trade and a few processing industries such as the production of copra and coir.

The traditional hindu social system of Malabar was noted for its rigidity. At the apex of the system was the very small caste of Nambudiris, the chief group of Malayali brahmins. In 1921 only 20,000 individuals were returned in the census of that year as "Malayali Brahmins" out of a total Malabar population of 3,100,000. Far larger was the group of sudra castes known as the 'Nairs' or 'Nayars' who numbered 450,000 in 1921. However, the largest caste, numbering 640,000, were the Tiers, whose traditional occupation was the planting and tapping of the coconut palm, and who were lower in the social scale than the Nairs. At the base of the hindu caste hierarchy in Malabar were various outcaste groups of which the Cherumars were the most numerous, with 240,000 individuals in 1921.[2]

Hindus made up 66 per cent of Malabar's population in 1921. In contrast with Travancore and Cochin, with their considerable christian populations, Malabar had fewer than two per cent of its population professing that faith. On the other hand, 32 per cent of the total population were muslims.[3] The great majority of these were Malayalam speakers, and, strictly speaking, it was only these Malabar muslims who were known as 'Moplahs'. There is no serious dispute that the vast majority of Moplahs, or at least their forebears, must have been converts to Islam from the native population of Malabar.

Up to 1766, Malabar consisted of the domains of a number of hindu rajas of whom, by this time, the Zamorin of Calicut had become the most powerful. From 1766 to 1792 Malabar was subject to muslim conquerors. These were the rulers of Mysore, first (1766-82) Haider Ali and later (1782-92) Tippu Sultan. In February 1792 Tippu was obliged formally to cede to the East India Company the whole

2 G. T. Boag, **Census of India, 1921,** Vol XIII, Part II, pp 118-23.

3 **Ibid,** Vol XIII, Part I, p 65.

of Malabar except Wynad, which was ceded after Tippu had been finally defeated and killed by British forces at his capital of Seringapatam in 1799.

Almost from the first the new British rulers found themselves in conflict with the Moplahs of the interior part of south Malabar. In 1800-02 it was necessary to put down a Moplah insurrection in this area. From 1836 to 1919 there occurred a number of violent incidents in which armed Moplahs, after attacking members of the hindu population, died fighting the government forces sent to deal with them. However, the rebellion of 1921-22 dwarfed in scale the preceding violence perpetrated by south Malabar Moplahs under British rule.

The Moplah rebellion broke out at a time when the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement was under way in Malabar. This movement for non-cooperation with British administration had been started throughout India by Mahatma Gandhi partly because of the repression of the nationalist-inspired challenges to the British **Raj** in the Punjab in 1919 and partly because of Allied policy to the empire of the Turkish Sultan and Caliph in the post-first world war period. It has been widely accepted that the Moplah rebellion occurred because the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement of 1920-21 had strongly affected what was a 'fanatical' muslim population living in the Ernad area of south Malabar. What has never been adequately explained is why the Ernad Moplah should have been 'fanatical' in the first place and in exactly what way did a middle-class nationalist movement like that of 1920-21 provoke a rural insurrection like the Moplah rebellion. The present work is an attempt to answer these questions and to analyse the chief characteristics of the rising itself. My hope is that, in so doing, a contribution will have been made to the understanding of an event which was of considerable importance in twentieth century Indian history. This work should also prove to be of interest as a case study to those concerned with more general problems of social and political history. Those concerned with the ways in which rural

populations in colonial countries have been brought into conflict with foreign rule should find **Moplah Rebellion and Its Genesis** of particular interest. However, it is hoped that the work will contribute to the understanding of a number of other, often related, problems such as the part religion might play as a medium for the prosecution of secular conflicts; how rural populations mobilise in the attempt to deal with grievances; the character of the impact of imperialism on rural society; and how nationalist movements in colonial countries have tried to mobilise rural populations against foreign rule.

I have argued in this work that the challenge to British rule which the Moplah rebellion represented was a consequence of the impact of that power on social relations in rural Malabar starting with the earliest period of British control of the area. For this reason the genesis of the rising is traced from the cession of Malabar to the East India Company in 1792. This is not to say that I subscribe to any view "that the British singlehandedly created social conflict in rural Malabar", a view which Stephen Dale has rightly rejected in a recent article.[4] Professor Dale has pointed out that, even before 1792, there was conflict between Moplahs and other groups in south Malabar.[5] This, however, cannot be allowed to obscure the fact that, after British rule had been imposed on the district, Moplahs began to feel, with much justification, that the new imperial set-up had tipped the scales decisively against them in such conflicts. As Professor Dale himself has pointed out, the violence of the Moplah under British rule represents "a response to a new economic and political context created by the British".[6] It is essentially in this context that this violence must be seen.

4 Stephen F. Dale, "The Mappilla Outbreaks: Ideology and Social Conflict in Nineteenth Century Kerala", **Journal of Asian Studies**, November 1975, Vol XXXV, No 1, p 97. For my own views on the argument presented in this article see my discussion contribution in the November 1976 issue of the same journal.

5 Stephen F. Dale, **loc cit**, p 96.

6 **Ibid**, p 97.

Since this study is an interpretative one, the arrangement of material is not strictly chronological. Chapter 1 constitutes an investigation both of social relations in rural Malabar under the impact of British rule and of the limits of Moplah response under conditions in which rebellion was impracticable. Chapter 2 tries to elaborate the sources of tension between the Moplah and British rule and to demonstrate the conditions under which Moplah disaffection might assume the form of insurrection. Chapters 3 and 4 seek to indicate how the Khilafat-non-cooperation campaign, undertaken under the auspices of the Indian National Congress in Malabar in 1920-21, came to trigger the rebellion of 1921-22. Chapter 3, investigates the basis of the association of the Moplah with the Malabar nationalist movement, Chapter 4 shows how the tensions of this association determined its fundamental character as one of the assimilation of the nationalist movement to Moplah tradition. Chapter 5, in analysing the chief characteristics of the 1921-22 rebellion, attempts to show how much they were determined by traditional rural Moplah patterns of mobilisation rather than by those of the nationalist agitation of 1920-21.

CHAPTER 1

The Moplah Outbreak

Interpretation of the Violence of 1836-1919

Definition

> "not mere riots or affrays, but murderous outrages, such as have no parallel in any other part of Her Majesty's dominions."[1]

The violence periodically committed during the nineteenth century by the Moplahs was a never-ending source of horrified fascination for British officials in the Madras Presidency. The curiosity consisted in the form of the violence, styled the Moplah 'outbreak' or 'outrage'.

Characteristically the preparations for an outbreak involved the intending participants donning the white clothes of martyr, divorcing their wives, asking those they felt they had wronged for forgiveness, and receiving the blessing of a **Tangal,** as the **Sayyids** or descendants of the Prophet are called in Malabar, for the success of their great undertaking.

Once the outbreak had been initiated openly, by the murder of their hindu victim, the participants would await the arrival of government forces by ranging the countryside, paying off scores against hindus they felt had ill-used them or other Moplahs, burning and defiling hindu temples, taking what food they needed, and collecting arms and recruits.

Finally, as the government forces closed in on them, a sturdy building was chosen for their last stand. Often

1 Minute by J. D. Sim, member, Council of Governor of Madras, n.d., MJP No 1606-A, 28 August 1874.

the mansion of some hindu landlord (frequently the residence of one of their victims) was selected, but hindu temples and other buildings were also used, the main criterion being apparently to avoid being captured alive. As a Moplah captured at Payyanad temple in 1898 put it, it was decided to die there "as it was a good building and we were afraid lest we would be shot in the legs and so caught alive".[2]

By the time the government forces had surrounded them, the outbreak participants had worked themselves into a frenzy by frequently praying, shouting the muslim creed as a war-cry and singing songs commemorating the events of past outbreaks, especially that of October 1843 in which seven Moplahs armed mainly with "war knives" scattered a heavily-armed detachment of sepoys with their charge. The climax of the drama came when they emerged from their 'post' to be killed as they tried to engage in hand-to-hand combat.

Divergences from this ideal pattern were frequent, but the essence of the Moplah outbreak, demarcating it from other forms of violence, consisted in the belief that participation was the act of a **shahid** or martyr and would be rewarded accordingly. As one outbreak participant (who receded at the last moment and was captured) said in explanation of why he and his associates "went out" (ie participated in the outbreak):

> "I have heard people sing that those who... fight and die after killing their oppressors, become shahids and get their reward. I have heard that the reward is 'Swargam' (Paradise)."[3]

The pattern of the Moplah outbreak was dictated by the fact that participants had no intention of evading the heavy hand of justice. On the contrary, their objective was to bring about their own destruction by hurling themselves

2 Statement of Trasheri Unni Ali, 4 April 1898, MJP Nos 1737-40, 11 November 1898, p 23.

3 Statement of Ambat Aidross, 16 March 1896, L/PJ/6/422, 996/96, p 15.

in a suicidal charge against the forces sent to deal with them. In the words of a wounded Moplah captured at Manjeri temple in 1896:

> "We came to the temple intending to fight with the troops and die. That is what we meant to do when we started."[4]

The defining characteristic of the Moplah outbreak was devotion to death.

Analysis

The Moplah outbreak was of spasmodic but not rare occurrence from 1836 to 1919. Between these dates there also occurred what the authorities assumed were abortive outbreak plots. In addition there were disturbances in which Moplahs embarked on what at first resembled disorders of the outbreak kind but in which, because of the retraction of the participants, no attempt to die fighting was ever made.[5] Even when such cases are excluded, 29 separate occasions can be distinguished in which Moplahs actively sought their own death.[6]

In all 29 cases except three,[7] the number of participants ranged from a single Moplah to 19. The final total depended partly on how quickly the outbreak was suppressed since usually the initiators were joined by recruits as the outbreak took its course. Thus, in the case of the 1896 outbreak, which was prolonged exceptionally for several days, the number of participants grew to a record 99 and others appear to have been on their way to join when the gang was rapidly destroyed, only five being taken alive. Of the 352 participants in the 29 outbreaks only 24 failed

4 Statement of Aruvirallah Muttha, 13 March 1896, report of H. M. Winterbotham, member, Madras Board of Revenue, 10 April 1896, L/PJ/6/422, 996/96, p 12.

5 For a summary of these putative plots and quasi-outbreaks, see appendix 2.

6 For a summary of these 29 outbreaks, see table on pp 11-14.

7 These exceptions were the outbreaks of August 1849 (65 participants), 1894 (34) and 1896 (99).

to achieve their end, and this includes the twelve forced to surrender in the very exceptional and significant case of the 1898 disturbances.[8]

An indication of the **type** of man who participated in outbreaks is conveyed by the remarks of the district magistrate responsible for the disarming in 1885 of the **taluks** in which outbreaks occurred, a policy measure adopted in the hope of making the disorders less frequent and formidable. He observed that "persons of undoubted social status", and those of "respectability and substance" (ie those paying at least Rs 200 in assessment due to government) were normally exempt from the general confiscation.[9] In fact, one report summed up the social background of the participants in the largest of all the outbreaks, that of 1896, as "field-labourers, porters, timber-floaters, mendicants, and others of the lowest class, living from hand to mouth".[10] It is recorded that the net value of the property of the dozen participants in the May 1885 outbreak amounted to a mere Rs 205.[11] Though this gang was probably rather exceptional in being so uniformly propertyless it is nevertheless true, as one investigator noted in 1853, that "many of this class of offenders (had) no property, and none (had) much".[12] Indeed, report after report on Moplah outbreaks indicates that the great majority of participants were wage-workers, poor tenants and the like with a sprinkling of mullahs of barely distinguishable economic standing, criminals on the point of having their careers cut short by authority, the chronically diseased and men who were rather more comfortably off but who, often, had experienced economic decline. It was calculated

8 See pp 29-30.

9 W. Logan, Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 30 June 1885, MJP No 1830, 13 July 1886, p 35; Logan to Chief Sec., 1 May 1885, MJP No 1337, 21 May 1885, p 98.

10 Report of Winterbotham, 10 April 1898, **loc cit**, p 6.

11 H. M. Winterbotham, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 10 July 1886, MJP No 2236, 23 August 1886, p 72.

12 Report of T. L. Strange, Special Commissioner, Malabar, 25 September 1852, MJP No 483, 23 August 1853, pp 4618-19.

Summary of the 29 Moplah Outbreaks of 1836-1919

Date	Location (all Ernad or Walluvanad taluks unless otherwise stated)	Victims		Participants (all Moplahs)
		Caste	Class	
26 November 1836	Pandalur	1 Kanisan (astrologer caste)	Unknown	1 (killed)
15 April 1837	Kalpetta	1 Mussad (Brahmin)	**Jenmi**	1 (killed)
5 April 1839	Mankada	1 Hindu	**Peon** (a low-ranking village-level Government servant, a club-bearer)	2 (killed)
6 April 1839	Mankada	1 Hindu	**Jenmi**	1 (captured)
19 April 1840	Irumbuzhi	1 Nair	Unknown	1 (killed)
5 April 1841	Pallipuram	2 Nambudiris 1 Nair	1 **jenmi**, 1 dependent of the **jenmi** and 1 adviser of the **jenmi**	9 (killed)
13 November 1841	Koduvayur	2 Nairs	1 **jenmi** 1 **peon**	11 (killed)
27 December 1841	Pallipuram	2 Nairs	1 **adhigari's** son 1 unknown	8 (killed)

1	2	3	4	5
19 October 1843	Tirurangadi	2 Nairs	1 **jenmi** (formerly an **adhigari**) and 1 **adhigari**	7 (killed)
11 December 1843	Pandikkad	1 Mussad 1 Nair	1 **jenmi** and **adhigari** and his servant	10 (killed)
26 May 1849	Exact location unknown. Shernad **taluk** (later western Ernad)	1 Nair	Unknown	1 (killed)
25 August 1849	Pandikkad	1 Tien 1 Brahmin 3 Nairs	1 'cultivator', 1 priest and guest of a **jenmi,** 1 servant of a **jenmi.** 1 **peon,** 1 'cultivator' and petty shopkeeper	65 (64 killed 1 captured)
5 January 1851	Payyanad	1 Nair	**Gomastah (taluk**-level government servant)	1 (killed)
22 August 1851	Mankada	4 Nairs 1 Nambudiri 1 Hindu	1 rich kariastan (**jenmi's** land agent) and ex-**adhigari,** 1 servant of the **kariastan,** 1 **mukiastan** (elder of a village) and **kanamdar** (tenant), 1 moneylender, 2 **jenmis**	19 (killed)

4 January 1852	Mattanur	12 Nambudiris 2 'Pattars' (non-Malayali Brahmins) 2 Nairs 3 Cherumars	2 **jenmis**, 10 family of **jenmis**, 2 visitors in **jenmi** house, 3 slaves of **jenmi**, 2 unknown	15 (killed)
9 August 1852	Koduvalli (Kurumbranad **taluk** later in Calicut **taluk**. North Malabar)	1 Nambudiri	Unknown	3 (killed)
16 September 1853	Angadipuram area	1 Nambudiri	Moneylender	2 (killed)
12 September 1855	Anakkayam (the home of the gang leader)	1 European 1 Nair	1 District Magistrate, 1 servant of **jenmi**	3 (killed)
4 February 1864	Melmuri	1 Nair	Teacher	1 (captured)
7 September 1873	Paral	2 Nairs	1 priest, 1 **jenmi**	9 (8 killed, 1 captured)
9 September 1880	Melattur	1 Cherumar	Field labourer	1 (killed)
27 December 1884	Urangattiri	1 Tien, 1 Embrandiri (Brahmin)	1 cooly, 1 unknown	11 (killed)

1	2	3	4	5
1 May 1885	Omachchapuzha (Ponnani **taluk**, South Malabar)	6 Cherumars	1 field labourer and his family	12 (killed)
11 August 1885	Melattur	1 Nair	**Jenmi**	1 (captured)
31 March 1894	Vellangad-Pandikkad	5 Nairs 1 Cherumar 1 Hindu	1 **jenmi**, 1 servant of a **jenmi**, 1 land agent, 1 slave of a Nair	34 (32 killed, 2 captured)
25 February 1896	Chembrasseri	2 Nairs, 1 Tattan (goldsmith caste)	1 **jenmi**, 1 land agent, 1 unknown	99 (94 killed, 5 captured)
1 April 1898	Pandikkad	1 Nambudiri	**Jenmi**	12 (captured)
28 February 1915	Karuvarakundu	1 European	District Magistrate	5 (4 killed, 1 captured)
6 February 1919	Mankada-Pallipuram	3 Nambudiris 1 Embrandiri (Brahmin), 1 Pattar (Brahmin), 2 Nairs	2 **jenmis**, 2 guests of **jenmis**, 1 retainer of **jenmi**, 2 members of **adhigari's** family	7 (killed)

that in the 1896 affair more than three-quarters of those involved were "more or less really poor", two or three per cent comfortable and the rest youths living with, and more or less supported by their parents.[13] In fact, although men of almost any age might be found in the ranks of outbreak participants, young men predominated. An average age of 22¼ years was calculated for the August 1849 gang,[14] whilst in that of 1896 about 30 per cent of the participants were in their teens, 40 per cent in their twenties, 20 per cent in their thirties and only seven per cent between the ages of 40 and 60.[15]

All the victims of the 29 outbreaks were hindus, with the exception of two collectors of Malabar, H. V. Conolly, who was murdered in 1855, and C. A. Innes, who narrowly escaped the same fate in 1915. The incident in 1851 in which a Moplah, discontented with an arrangement concerning family property, stabbed five of his own relatives and announced his intention of dying as a martyr is not included in the 29 outbreaks since there appears to be no evidence that he "sought actively his own death".[16]

Of the 82 hindu victims, the caste status of 78 is determinable. Of these, 63 were members of high castes (23 Nambudiri brahmins, six non-Malayali brahmins and 34 others, very largely Nairs) and the other 15 of castes ranking below Nairs in the hierarchy, eleven being Cherumars, traditionally field slaves in Malayali society.

Something of the class background of 72 of the hindu victims is known. Nineteen were rich **jenmis** (landlords) and/or moneylenders, four were **kariastans** (land agents) and advisers of **jenmis**, 18 guests, retainers, servants and similar dependents of **jenmis**, ten members of **jenmis'**

13 Report of F. Fawcett, Police Supt., Malabar, 5 June 1896, MJP No 1567, 30 September 1896, pp 101-03.

14 Report of W. Robinson, Head Asst. Magistrate, Malabar, 18 October 1849, MJP No 794, 1 December 1849, p 4909.

15 Report of J. T. Gillespie, Acting Special Asst. Magistrate, Malabar, 26 April 1896, MJP No 1567, 30 September 1896, pp 38-47.

16 Report of Conolly, 23 July 1851, MJP, 29 July 1851, pp 2504-05.

families, five village headmen (where not definitely known to be **jenmis** as well, as headmen in Malabar villages usually were) and four other government officials, making a total of 58 known to be themselves powerful figures in the Malabar countryside, or directly associated with such. Of the twelve remaining victims whose class status is known three were labourers, five members of one labourer's family, one priest, two cultivators and one teacher.

Of the 29 **jenmis** and moneylenders and their families who fell victim to Moplah outbreaks 20 were Nambudiri brahmins and eight Nairs, with one of unknown caste, whilst the eleven agents and officials comprised one Nambudiri, nine Nairs and one unknown. This restriction of those victims classifiable as 'powerful' to the high hindu castes was not fortuitous. Malabar, and especially that part where outbreaks occurred, was throughout this period pre-eminently the land of the big Nambudiri brahmin **jenmi** and the Nair official. As Sir Charles Turner, Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, said in 1885 of the traditional Malayali fable that Parasu Rama had created Kerala (south-western India, including Malabar) exclusively for the brahmins to hold as **jenmis**, it "was no doubt invented to give colour to the claim which the brahmin asserted and which to a very considerable extent be certainly enjoyed", that the right to hold **jenmom** property was his alone.[17] Nearly all the big **jenmis** were in fact high-caste hindus. This earliest British administrators in Malabar referred to "the Namboory Brahmins and Nayrs" as the "primary landholders" of the district,[18] whilst in 1915 District Magistrate Innes gave figures showing that the 86 biggest landlord families, owning many hundreds of thousands of acres and paying about a fifth of the total land revenue, were all high-caste hindus except two Moplahs, one Tiya

17 **Minute on Malabar Land Tenures Draft Bll, pp 21-22.**

18 **Report on Joint Commission from Bengal and Bombay, 1792-93, Vol I, p 173.**

and one Goundan.[19] A similar investigation in 1881-82 showed that of 829 "principal **jenmis**" (defined as holding not less than a hundred pieces of land in an **amsom** or 'parish'), 370 were Nambudiris, 339 Nairs, 61 Rajahs, nine non-Malayali brahmins, eight Tiyas, four other hindus, one European and 37 Moplahs. Significantly, in the outbreak zone of the Ernad and Walluvanad **taluks**, "principal **jenmis**" were even more exclusively identifiable with the high hindu castes, for the total of 292 comprised 173 Nambudiris, 96 Nairs, 20 Rajahs and a mere two Moplahs.[20]

Some measure of the wealth and power of such high-caste hindu **jenmis** was conveyed by a statistical register of holdings compiled during the investigation of 1881-82. The great **jenmi** of the Pandikkad area of Ernad, the Karukamanna Nilakandhan Mussad, a brahmin, held as his **jenmom** property 126 pieces of grain land and 36 pieces of garden land in Pandikkad **amsom** alone.[21] Of the 72 actual cultivators in Pandikkad holding directly from this brahmin or via an intermediary, it was estimated that one was in "good circumstances", twelve "fairly well off" and 49 "badly off". Nor was this **jenmi** unique in the extent of his holdings and the number of his tenants. Indeed, Kuttipuratt Sangara Panikkar, a Nair **jenmi**, was recorded as holding 74 pieces of grain land and 194 of garden land in the **amsom** of Urakam Melmuri in which the 169 actual cultivators holding land from him, directly or indirectly, included ten in "good circumstances", 27 "fairly well off" and 114 "badly off".[22] The statistical register of 1881-82

19 C. A. Innes, "Strictly Confidential Note on the Malabar Tenancy Legislation", MRP No 3021, 26 September 1917, p 25.

20 W. Logan, "Report on Malabar Land Tenures", Government of Madras, **Malabar Special Commission, 1881-82,** Vol I, p lvi.

21 These figures were culled from revenue returns. Because these were recorded on an **amsom** basis, the compiler gives no indication of the total holdings throughout Malabar of each **jenmi**. However, **jenmis** not infrequently had their holdings confined to one, or a few, **amsoms** in one general locality.

22 Statistical Register of Holdings, Government of Madras, **Malabar Special Commission, 1881-82,** Vol II, pp 237-315. The condition of the other 18 cultivators was, presumably, not known.

gave no figures for acreages held by such **jenmis.** However, when the estate of the greatest Malabar **jenmi,** the Zamorin of Calicut was taken over by the Court of Wards in 1915, it was estimated that there were in Malabar 39,970 acres of land surveyed and registered in the revenue accounts in his name. At least the same acreage of unsurveyed and unassessed land was estimated to belong to the Zamorin, who also held an unknown amount of land not registered in his own name. Further, he was co-trustee of, and therefore beneficiary from, an extremely rich and well-endowed estate of temple lands known as the Guruvayur Devaswom estate. The Zamorin claimed that the gross annual income from his estate was Rs 364,000.[23] It should be noted that this, the greatest **jenmi** in Malabar, was overwhelmingly a south Malabar **jenmi.** Of the 37,970 acres of land registered in the Zamorin's name, 34,343 acres were in the four southernmost **taluks** of Malabar of which Ernad and Walluvanad accounted for 17,809 acres.[24]

The powerful and often hereditary post of **adhigari (amsom** headman) was very frequently in the hands of a member of the joint family of a rich **jenmi** of the **amsom.**[25] As one Malabar official remarked in 1856, in his district an **adhigari** was not "a mere head-man of a petty village consisting of a few hundred huts... and inhabited by his equals in poverty" but was "or ought to be a man of considerable landed property, of respectable and old family".[26] Under these circumstances the caste background of the **adhigaris** of Malabar tended to an important degree to

23 C. A. Innes to Sec. to Court of Wards, 12 October 1914, MRP No 897, 17 April 1915, p 6.

24 Zamorin to Innes, 17 August 1914, **ibid**, p 14.

25 A. F. Pinhey, Malabar Collector to Sec., Commissioner of Revenue Settlement and Director of Land Records and Agriculture, 1 June 1902, MRP No 754, 23 August 1902, p 440.

26 C. Collett, Sub-Collector, Malabar to Malabar Collector, 1 March 1856, MJP No 381, 1 April 1857, pp 39-40. See also the discussion of the establishment of the **adhigari** system on pp 62-63.

reflect that of the **jenmis**, with a very high proportion of high-caste hindus and relatively few Moplahs. In 1851, after a period in which Collector H. V. Conolly had deliberately tried to increase the number of muslims in the public services, Moplahs still held only 22 of the 81 **adhigari** posts in the "fanatic **taluks**" of Ernad, Shernad and Walluvanad, where the Moplah population was estimated at 81 per cent of hindu total.[27] When Conolly took charge of Malabar in 1840 there were apparently only two fixed and eight acting Moplah **adhigaris** in the three taluks.[28] A similar or even more marked disproportion of hindus existed in the other village-level posts of **menon** (accountant) and **peon** (club-bearer), whilst the higher levels of the administration and the judiciary were especially heavily weighted with Nairs and other high-caste hindus. Conolly's figures in the early 1850s indicated that of 330 higher grade appointments in the Malabar administration only seven were held by Moplahs.[29] In the same period it was pointed out that the native judges were chiefly hindus,[30] whilst the police force in the 'fanatic' **taluks** was made up of 72 per cent hindus and 28 per cent muslims.[31]

One striking feature of the Moplah outbreak was its virtual restriction to only one part of the area of Malabar inhabited by Moplahs. With only three exceptions every outbreak took place in the rural parts of interior south

27 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 16 October 1851, MJP No 720, 2 December 1851, pp 4340-41. 'Shernad' or 'Chernad' was a **taluk** in south-west Malabar until in 1860 it was merged with 'Ernad', to form a new **taluk** which retained the latter name.

28 Note of Conolly on petition of 29 hindus of Ernad, Walluvanad and Shernad, 12 August 1851, MJP No 720, 2 December 1851, p 4348. For the hostility of important British officials in Malabar to the inducting of Moplahs into public office in the district in the early nineteenth century see the comment of Major Alexander Walker, Commissioner in Malabar 1800-01, below pp 108-09.

29 Conolly to Strange, 10 September 1852, MJP No 56, 27 January 1853, p 399.

30 Minute of J. F. Thomas, 3 November 1852, MJP No 483, 23 August 1853, pp 4696-97.

31 Conolly to Strange, 10 September 1852, **loc cit**, p 595.

Malabar (and of the remaining 26 all but one[32] in Ernad **taluk** or northern Walluvanad). The three exceptions comprise two[33] in the rural interior of north Malabar and one in which Moplahs from interior south Malabar made their way to the residence of District Magistrate Conolly in Calicut town to butcher him and thereby openly initiate their outbreak.

This phenomenon of geographical restriction was not the least of the enigmas the Moplah outbreak presented to perplexed British administrators, for whom the fact that Pandalur Hill happened to be located roughly in the centre of the outbreak zone came to assume obsessive proportions. "I have puzzled for twenty-five years why outbreaks occur within fifteen miles of Pandalur Hill and cannot profess to solve it", was the lamentation of H. M. Winterbotham in a report on the outbreak of 1896.[34]

Interpretation. Part 1: Official Rationale

For decades this startling phenomenon of the Moplah outbreak presented British administration with the most taxing problem of interpretation, a problem it seemed necessary to solve if appropriate policy measures were to be adopted.

Since so many of the attacks involved the selection of victims who were rich landlords or their agents and since so many of their assailants were men in social positions vulnerable to the adverse exercise of their economic and social power, it seemed obvious to ascribe Moplah outbreaks to antagonism between landlord and tenant, or landlord and labourer. As Malabar Magistrate H. V. Conolly put it in 1844:

32 The May 1885 outbreak which occurred in Ponnani **taluk**.

33 Those of January 1852 (Kottayam **taluk**) and August 1852 (Kurumbranad **taluk**. After the rearrangement of **taluk** boundaries in 1860 the area of this outbreak was within Calicut **taluk**).

34 Report of Winterbotham, 5 May 1896, MJP No 1567, 30 September 1896, p 62.

> "The most ready supposition on hearing of such atrocities committed by the lower on the higher ranks of society is that the people have been driven to desperation and forced to take the law into their own hands by some intolerable tyranny".[35]

What strengthened the presumption was the fact that, on the occasions when the grievances of outbreak participants were recorded, a sense of oppression by landlords, buttressed by the courts and local administration, figured prominently. Thus the participants in the December 1843 Pandikkad outbreak, which was directed against overbearing local notables, complained that "it is impossible for people to live quietly while the Atheekarees **(adhigaris)** and Jenmies... treat us in this way."[36] Again, the leader of the 1849 gang, Athan Gurikal, left behind a document in which he claimed that the behaviour of landlords in collusion with public servants, "the majority... being of Hindoo caste", was a source of grievance to "the Mussalmen inhabiting the inland part of Malabar".[37]

One of the main ways in which landlords were felt to be behaving oppressively was their use of eviction recognised by the courts. One specific method of exercising these powers which was especially resented, and which became popular with **jenmis** in the course of the outbreak period,[38] was by the granting of **melcharths** or 'overleases' by which the **jenmi** sold to a third party the right to oust and replace one of his tenants. Thus, a Moplah captured in 1896 gave as a reason for the outbreak the grievance that "poor

35 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 2 January 1844, MJP No 69, 27 January 1844, p 266.

36 "The Wurrola chit (anonymous writing) written for the perusal and information of Walluvanad Tahsildar" left behind in the house in which the **shahid** had 'taken post', MJP No 69, 27 January 1844, p 286.

37 "Writing of Syed Assan, Manjery Athan and all the others who have taken possession of Manjery temple", MJP No 794, 1 December 1849, p 4784.

38 See below pp 126-27.

folks who have only two or three paras of land are ejected and put to trouble by the grant of **melcharths** over their heads."[39]

Almost every British official concerned with interpreting the Moplah outbreak was prepared to concede that all was not well with landlord-tenant relations in Malabar, and the grievance over insecurity of tenure was repeatedly stressed by them. However, explaining outbreaks as anti-**jenmi** manifestations posed difficult problems with which those Malabar collectors most responsive to tenant grievance grappled with only very partial success. In particular, since **hindu** tenants and labourers admittedly suffered quite as much, if not more, from the great power of the big **jenmi**, why were outbreaks confined to the muslim community? Moreover, why should some of the assaults have been directed against hindus who were not only not landlords, but members of the slave caste at least as vulnerable to the exercise of **jenmi** power as many of the assailants themselves? Failure by those who stressed the agrarian explanation for outbreaks adequately to answer such questions undermined their case for legislation to grant occupancy rights to tenants, a measure they urged as essential if the Moplah problem were to be solved.[40]

The shortcomings of the case presented by the "pro-tenant" school of Malabar collectors were seized on by the government of Madras which in this period at least, was most reluctant to intervene in agrarian relations in Malabar in favour of the tenant. Would-be reformers were fully conscious that before any meddling with the powers of the **jenmi** could be considered it was incumbent on them "to show some political necessity for interference".[41] The

39 Statement of Puzhutini Kunyayu, 14 March 1896, L/PJ/6/422, 996/96, p 12.

40 W. Logan, "Report on Malabar Land Tenures", **loc cit**, Vol I, pp lxxx and lxxxi; H. M. Winterbotham, Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 14 February 1890, MJP No 2530, 11 December 1851, p 67.

41 Report of Madhava Rao Commission to advise the Govt. of Madras on legislation on Malabar land tenures, 17 July 1884, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures**, p 122.

neglect of Collector Innes to show any such thing when he presented his case for legislation in 1917 met with this response from the Board of Revenue:

> "Mr. Innes speaks of the janmis of Malabar as a 'political force on the side of Government'. In the Board's opinion there can be no doubt that tenancy legislation of the kind now suggested would be a grave political mistake, as it would alienate this force from the Government, and the Government could not count on receiving from the tenants anything in the way of gratitude to replace this loss."[42]

The board strongly recommended that the question of tenancy legislation for Malabar should be dropped and the government of Madras readily agreed.[43]

As early as 1852, when the outbreak situation had become so serious that a special commissioner, T. L. Strange, had been appointed to ascertain the cause of outbreaks, the local government had hinted at another interpretation of the phenomenon and a different policy approach when it issued Strange with his instructions. He was to bear in mind that his "grand object" should be "to secure to the Nair and Brahmin population the most ample protection and safety possible against the effect of Moplah fanaticism".[44] With such a direction, perhaps it is not surprising that Strange came to the conclusion that outbreaks were not due to agrarian grievance but that "the most decided fanaticism...has furnished the true incentive to them", adding that the "pride and intolerance fostered by the Mahomedan faith, coupled with the grasping and treacherous, and vindictive character of the Moplahs in these districts drawn out to its worst extent have fomented the evil and it may be said to lie at the root thereof".[45]

42 Reference from Board of Revenue, 1 May 1917, MRP No 3021, 26 September 1917, p 6.

43 Govt. Order 3021, **ibid,** p 6.

44 Minute No 123, 17 February 1852, MJP, p 678.

45 Report of Strange, 25 September 1852, **loc cit**, pp 4587 and 4591.

As an 'explanation' for the Moplah outbreak this posed more questions than it answered. In particular, why should the muslims of the two Malabar **taluks** have reacted fanatically to their religion when so many muslim communities, including those in the rest of Malabar, admittedly did not? The claim that it was the 'character' of these particular muslims to react in this way in itself explained nothing.

Moreover, the attributing of outbreaks to religious fanaticism itself posed policy problems for government. British administrators in India tended to believe that interference in the religious affairs of the people was more likely to stir up trouble than allay it. As was said of an 1896 proposal to regulate the teaching of the **ulema:**

> "Any real attempt to control religious teaching and preaching would be viewed as persecution, and we should have sedition preached on the hill-tops, in the depths of the jungle, and in dens and holes in the earth."[46]

Even so, the government **did** act on Strange's report. Its representatives in Malabar had already persuaded one of the leading Ernad **Tangals,** Syed Fazl, the Mambram **Tangal,** who was suspected of fomenting outbreaks, to remove himself to Arabia.[47] But its main policy instruments were the repressive Moplah Acts of 1854. Formulating a repressive policy to deal with men whose very aim was death was not found to be an easy task. However, the Moplah acts provided for the banning of the Moplah warknife, the deportation without trial of anyone suspected of intending to participate in an outbreak, the confiscation to government of the property of participants, and the levying of fines on the inhabitants of localities involved in the disturbances. This last provision was especially significant. It reflected the conviction of all government servants in

46 Report of Winterbotham, 5 May 1896, **loc cit,** p 64.

47 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 20 March 1852, MJP No 216, 26 March 1852, p 1152.

Malabar that the great majority of Moplahs were sustaining outbreaks by their sympathy with them. The remark of Collector Conolly in 1843 that it seemed evident that the Moplahs' "real sympathies were always enlisted on the side on the Criminals"[48] was typical. In 1849 Conolly remarked that seldom did "a Moplah of the lower order" pass the grave of any participant in earlier outbreaks "but in silence and with an attitude of devotion, such as is usual in this district in passing a mosque", adding that "despite the prohibition of the authorities, ceremonies are from time to time secretly performed in their remembrance to an admiring audience".[49] The memory of a number of the most audacious **shahid** bands was kept alive in popular songs composed in their honour.

It would be natural to enquire, in view of the sympathy for the **shahid** evident among the Ernad Moplahs, more especially the lower social orders, whether the Moplah community of the outbreak zone, or at least an important section of it, was gaining in any way from outbreaks. There is no record of any investigation of this question by the government of Madras. Even so, it is clear that it was hoped that the policy of fining would mean the Moplah community as a whole, and more particularly its richer and more influential members who were to be the especial target of the fines, would come to believe it must lose whenever an outbreak occurred, and act accordingly.

In fact, the record shows that the frequency of outbreaks **did** decline after the passing of the acts. From 1836 to 1854, when the measures were enacted, 17 outbreaks occurred. From 1855 to 1887, when a change of policy was effected, the total was only seven. In the first period (of 18 years) outbreaks occurred at a rate of almost one every year, in the second period (of 32 years) one every four or five years.

48 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 4 November 1843, MJP No 69, 27 January 1844, p 216.

49 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 28 July 1849, MJP No 503, 7 August 1849, pp 2574-78.

The administration began to feel their aim of rendering outbreaks "comparatively unimportant and unfrequent"[50] was being achieved. Even so outbreaks **did** continue. Moreover, in 1880, an anonymous petition was received setting out tenant grievances, especially regarding eviction, and threatening that "the severity of the oppression of the Malabar landlords will lead to great disturbances, at which a great number of people will lose their lives... disturbances and bloodshed of a kind unknown in Malabar".[51] As a result another special commissioner, W. Logan, was appointed, this time to investigate Malabar land tenures.

Logan argued that the Moplah outbreak was the outcome of administrations imposing through the courts their British agrarian preconceptions on a state of society fundamentally different from that of their homeland. By recognising the **jenmi** as the absolute owner of his holding and "therefore free to take as big a share of the produce of the soil as he could screw out of the classes beneath him" the British had, Logan claimed, presented him with powers which were not customary in Malabar.[52] Logan pressed in vain for occupancy rights to be conferred on certain categories of tenant to curb **jenmi** power. The government was not prepared to accede to this demand. Instead it passed the Compensation for Tenants' Improvements Act of 1887 which provided for payment by **jenmis**, in the event of their resorting to eviction, of what was intended to be the full market value (at rates determined by court commissioners) of improvements made by tenants. The hope was that this require-

50 Minute No 123, 17 February 1852, MJP, p 678.

51 "Petition purporting to be addressed by certain Mussulmans, Nayars, Tiyyans and men of other castes inhabiting Malabar", 14 October 1880, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures**, pp 14-15.

52 "Report on Malabar Land Tenures", Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Special Commission, 1881-82**, Vol I, p xvii.

ment would impose "a check on the arbitrary exercise of the power of eviction".[53]

In fact, although it was reported in 1894 that the act had, on the whole, "worked...favourably for the tenants",[54] it failed in its purpose of securing to them the full market value of their improvements on eviction. The wording of the act had resulted in a number of court decisions which laid down that the compensation payable was to be determined on the basis of the cost of making the improvement rather than (what was normally far higher) the price it would fetch on the open market. To replace the 1887 act an amended bill was prepared in 1898 which was in effect a compromise based on both methods of determining the amount of compensation awardable and this measure became law in 1900 in the teeth of **jenmi** opposition.

Although even the considerably strengthened Act of 1900 still failed to secure to the Malabar tenant what had been promised him in 1886, the full market value of his improvements on eviction, administrators of widely differing sympathies were agreed that the new legislation was an important weapon in the hands of the tenant. Certainly the Court of Wards administration of the estate of one big Malabar **jenmi** found the 1900 Act a very real obstacle to its desire to terminate the leases of certain of its tenants in 1902-03.[55] Moreover, the difficulties faced by the **jenmi** were further increased in the late nineteenth century by two acts of 1896, one for the registration of **jenmis** and the other concerning rent recovery.

The **Jenmi** Registration Act was the outcome of a High Court ruling which rendered it necessary that the old Malabar practice since the beginning of the century of

53 Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures Committee Report,** 22 February 1887, p 5.

54 Report of H. Bradley, Acting Malabar Collector, 31 January 1894, MJP No 2374 (Conf.), 1 October 1894, p 2.

55 A. F. Pinhey, Malabar Collector and Agent to Court of Wards, to Sec., Court of Wards, 6 February 1903, MRP No 596, 13 June 1903, p 5.

settling the land revenue with occupants who were not proprietors[56] should be discontinued. Further, it was ruled, the **jenmis** should be ascertained, registered and made primarily responsible for the revenue. The implementation of this measure produced a chorus of complaints from the **jenmis** which the Collector A. F. Pinhey regarded as "for the most part genuine",[57] about the difficulties presented by their new role of revenue-collector. Pinhey himself had found as agent in Malabar to the Court of Wards that during the latter's administration of the estate of the Kavalappara Nair, profits had been reduced as a consequence of the initial operation of the **Jenmi** Registration Act.[58] The act was all the more unwelcome to the **jenmi** since it came just before a new settlement of the Malabar land revenue at the turn of the century enhanced the total assessment by 76 per cent.[59] Moreover, the problem of recovering this heavier government demand from the tenants was exacerbated by an 1896 Act, the provisions of which the **jenmi** for years continued to challenge. This act, by excluding Malabar from the operation of the Madras Rent Recovery Act of 1865, deprived the **jenmi** of the power of distraint. As the government of Madras pointed out in 1895:

> "It is in the highest degree inexpedient that this summary power of distraint should be allowed in Malabar. Every exercise of it by Hindu janmis, or, as will generally be the case, their land agents, who

56 The chief reason for the decision in the earliest period of British rule not to collect the government's dues directly from the **jenmi** seems to have been the fact that at that time **jenmom** property was very often heavily encumbered with debt and the landlords generally in no economic position to ensure the satisfaction of the revenue demand, see below pp 110-11.

57 Report of 25 October 1902, MBRP (RS, LR & A) No 273, 18 December 1902, pp 2-4.

58. A. F. Pinhey, Malabar Collector and Agent to Court of Wards to Sec., Court of Wards, 25 October 1902, MRP No 596, 13 June 1903, p 3.

59 Govt. Order No 883, MRP, 29 August 1900, p 1096.

> are a generally low class of men, on their Moplah tenants is likely, owing to the strained relations existing between them in many places, to lead to a repetition of those outbreaks of which there have been several regrettable instances within the last few years."

In fact, if the Malabar **jenmi** were to have the same powers of distraint commanded by landlords in the rest of the Presidency the local government was not prepared to "be responsible for the peace of the district."[60]

Thus, very largely for political reasons, a series of legislative measures was undertaken in the late nineteenth century which, whilst still leaving the **jenmi** "a power in the land",[61] made the exercise of that power more uncertain. Meanwhile, after two bad disturbances in the earlier 1890s, outbreaks came to an end for an unprecedented 17-year period with the remarkable outcome to the abortive affair of 1898.

Like most outbreaks, that of 1898 departed from the ideal pattern in several ways. In particular the initiators probably had no settled intention of becoming **shahid** in the period of preparation for what at first was simply an assault on a big Nambudiri **jenmi** by timber carters aggrieved at the payment they had received from him and the beating he had had meted out to them when they protested. When the **jenmi** was actually killed in the course of the assault, the gang appeared to have decided to die as martyrs and the affair then took the course of a normal outbreak. The late decision to become **shahid** was probably not unique and seems to have been a feature of outbreaks on previous occasions, notably that of November 1841.

What was very significant however was the way the affair ended. When the government forces arrived at the

60 Letter No 2521, 25 June 1895 (Conf.), Acting Sec., Govt. of Madras to Sec., Govt of India, Revenue and Agriculture Dept., L/PJ/6/408, 1909/95, p 3.

61 Conf. report of A. F. Pinhey, 20 May 1902, MBRP (Rs, LR & A) No 93, 10 April 1905.

temple selected for the last stand, they found it surrounded by three or four hundred Moplahs, led by a local **Tangal** in the process of trying to induce the gang's surrender, which was in fact effected.

Quite apart from any persuasive power of the **Tangals** who parleyed with the gang[62] it is clear that the continuation of the outbreak by means of the final suicidal charge became impossible once several hundred Moplahs had separated the gang from its objective, hand-to-hand combat with the government forces. The British administration, whose servants in Malabar had openly despaired of ever being able to devise a method of capturing outbreak participants alive had been witness to a pacific demonstration of the power of numbers of which Gandhi himself might have been proud. As G. W. Dance, the collector, pointed out in his report, such a thing had never before been known in the history of Moplah outbreaks and yet this had happened in Payyanad, an **amsom** ('parish') notorious for its outbreak record and this after the gang had murdered an unpopular hindu **jenmi.**[63]

The British had for decades been familiar with the widespread support, both overt and covert, for outbreaks on the part of Ernad Moplahs. That this striking demonstration in the heart of the outbreak zone indicated a shift in attitude within the community seems even more likely when the following 17 years of freedom from outbreaks are considered. As one British official had perceived in 1896, "until outbreaks become unpopular with the Moplahs as a body, they will not cease."[64]

62 In view of the number of times the unsupported remonstrances of Moplah divines had in the past failed to have any effect on intending **shahid** (see p 49), it seems unlikely that those who went out to die in 1898 were stayed by the **Tangals.**

63 Report of Dance, 19 April 1898, MJP Nos 1737-40, 11 November 1898, p 18.

64 Report of Winterbotham, 5 May 1896, **loc cit,** p 66.

Interpretation. Part 2: Thesis

The manifest support for outbreaks on the part of the great mass of Ernad Moplahs, more especially "among the lowest orders"[65] seems to have been rooted in resentment at the exercise by high-caste hindus of massive power based ultimately on a virtual monopoly of land-ownership.

Malabar in this period was a country in which land-ownership was restricted to a very small proportion of the population. According to the censuses 1901 and 1911 only some five to six per cent of the total population 'working' in agriculture were land-owners.

LAND-OWNERSHIP IN THE MALABAR AGRICULTURAL WORKING POPULATION 1901 AND 1911[66]

	Land-owners	Total employed in agriculture (land-owners, tenants, farm servants and field labourers)	Percentage of column 1 to column 2
1901	46,040	809,616	5.7
1911	38,478	754,787	5.1

The district was also one in which **large** land-ownership especially was very largely confined to the high hindu castes.[67] What was described by Rajah Sir T. Madhava Rao (by no means an opponent of the principle of landlordism) as "an extraordinary...a stringent and systematic monopoly of land" by the big **jenmis** was "well fortified by law on all sides", including the law of primogeniture and the system of joint families, the law providing for adoption in the case of failure of heirs and that debarring the **jenmi** from making gifts of land.[68] It was forti-

65 Report of Robinson, 18 October 1849, **loc cit,** p 4951.

66 W. Francis, **Census of India, 1901,** Vol XV-A, pp 231-33; J. Chartres Molony, **Census of India, 1911,** Vol XII, Pt 2, pp 140-42.

67 See pp 16-17.

68 "Note by Raja Sir T. Madhava Row, being a brief statement of the exceptional circumstances of the Malabar district, demanding exceptional treatment", enclosure to appendix F(c), Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures Committee Report,** pp 29-30.

fied also by the **jenmi's** strong traditional aversion to the sale of land, noted by all officials from the earliest period of British rule. Moreover, it had been officially decided during the early period of British administration in Malabar that any waste land in the district was the property not of the state but of private individuals.[69] This proved to be a most important factor in the perpetuation of the land monopoly of a small group. In view of this ruling, courts in Malabar were obliged to find **jenmis** for pieces of land for which claims had never been made.[70] One exasperated collector in 1889 spoke of "the pestilential legal fiction that all waste land in Malabar must have a private owner" adding:

> "I call it 'pestilential', because it constantly sets up a bogus individual to defraud the public. Wide stretches of unoccupied primeval forest, extensive unreclaimed marshes and sandy tracts, innumerable hills and waste lands used from time immemorial as common grazing grounds and places where the people at large cut fuel and grass, all fall within the scope of this mendacious fiction, which operates as a direct, a standing invitation for the preferment of unfounded, preposterous individual claims. It has become locally necessary to invent a name for the portions of the district which no janmi has yet usurped, and to call them 'janmi-seeking lands'."[71]

The **jenmis'** monopoly of the smallest portions of the major source of subsistence, of power and even of the means of religious practice, was sometimes manifestly resented by Moplah outbreak participants. As the spokesman of the August 1851 gang bitterly remarked of the difficulty the Kolatur Moplahs were experiencing in trying to obtain a site for a mosque from their Nair landlord,

69 Logan, **Malabar Manual,** Vol I, pp 681-82.

70 H. M. Winterbotham, Acting Collector, Malabar to Chief Sec., 24 April 1888, MLP No 60, 2 August 1888, p 3.

71 Winterbotham to Sec. to Commissioners, Land Revenue, 22 November 1889, MRP No 1152, 3 December 1891, p 73.

"what is the loss to the Nairs and Numboories if a piece of ground capable of sowing five Parrahs of seed be allotted for the construction of a Mosque? Let those hogs [the soldiers] come here, we are resolved to die".[72]

But it was the power to manipulate the British legal system to the disadvantage of the tenantry that the **jenmi** land monopoly conferred that was most consciously resented by the Ernad Moplah. T. L. Strange, in his report of 25 September 1852 as special commissioner in Malabar, noted that five of the relatives of the August 1851 outbreak participants, when examined subsequently to the disturbance, said, "they had been taught to believe that if a poor man had been evicted from land it was a religious merit to kill the landlord".[73] W. Robinson, in his report of 18 October 1849, went so far as to say of the total destruction of one big **jenmi**'s papers (a frequent event in Moplah outbreaks) that it was "so natural a step for a set of ignorant Moplah lads taught from childhood to look on these as the weapons with which the Nair and Raja Jenmies... were ruining their Caste in the Courts and elsewhere, that their preservation had been to me unaccountable".[74]

Where reports on Moplah outbreaks are detailed enough, time after time it is found that participants (or their families) had suffered from the attempt of a **jenmi** to exploit his powers under the British legal system at the expense of his tenants. The case of the Nair **jenmi** who changed the terms of one of his Moplah tenant families from a rent of 59 per cent of the net produce to one of 77 per cent for a doubling of the annual expenditure of labour and found himself as a result the objective of an outbreak led by one of the family[75] is merely one of the best-documented instances. In another case in which a

72 "Memorandum of the conversation between the Walluvanad Tahsildar and the fanatics", 28 August 1851, MJP No 700, 20 November 1851, p 3774.

73 **Loc cit**, p 4560.

74 **Loc cit**, p 4939.

75 Conolly to Strange, 30 September 1852, MJP No. 716, 6 November 1852, pp 466-72 and 4667-69.

Moplah **verumpattomdar** (simple tenant) found himself, as a result of **jenmi** demands, in hopeless debt, this captured outbreak participant had said of his motive for "going out":

> "I thought within myself, 'I cannot stand the disgrace of these people (his **jenmis**) filing suits and putting me in jail. There are some who are preparing to die as Sahids. I will go and join them and make an end of it'."[76]

The kind of tensions created by the **jenmi**'s exploitation of the British courts to the disadvantage of his tenants were described by the district magistrate Logan in 1881, at the beginning of his investigation into Malabar land tenures. During a tour of one particularly notorious part of the "fanatic zone" near Pandalur Hill, he discovered "considerable friction" between landlord and tenant and warned that "if the Hindu (Nambudri) landlords press the men still further in the Courts, matters will speedily come to a crisis".[77] Indeed, after a further Commission had been appointed in 1884, under the presidency of Raja Madhava Rao, to advise the government of Madras on the question of tenancy legislation for Malabar, it was agreed that in the district there prevailed "grave discontent... among the agricultural class regarding the growing insecurity of their tenures".[78]

Throughout the outbreak period of 1836-1919 the presence of large numbers of rural dwellers without land to cultivate on their own behalf, and therefore only too ready to compete for leases, placed the **jenmi** in a strong position to increase his exactions from the tenant. Though many other employment categories of the landless in the Malabar countryside, such as "porters" and "general labourers", no doubt helped intensify the competition for land leases, the size of the agricultural labourer population, notoriously great in Malabar of all parts of south India, provides

76 Statement of Ambat Aidross, 16 March 1896, in report of Winterbotham, 10 April 1896, L/PJ/6/422, 996/96, p 14.

77 Logan to Chief Sec., 7 January 1881, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures**, p 25.

78 Report of Commissioners, 17 July 1884, **ibid**, p 122.

some indication of this land hunger.

SIZE OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURER POPULATION (ACTUAL WORKERS) IN MALABAR, 1901 AND 1911[79]

	1	2
	Number of field labourers and farm servants	**Percentage of column 1 to total population working in agriculture**
1901	500,197	61.8
1911	457,459	60.7

It was the **jenmi**'s exploitation of this favourable market situation to increase rents and other dues, such as fees taken for the renewal of leases, which was a source of resentment for those who suffered from it. The register of 2200 petitions presented to Logan during his investigation into Malabar land tenures contains many complaints about **jenmis** forcing up the level of rents and renewal fees. In one case a substantial Ernad Moplah tenant found his rent of 378 **paras**[80] of grain raised to 1000 **paras** by his hindu **jenmi** at the time for the renewal of the lease. Moreover, the **jenmi** had demanded Rs 1000 as a 'present' for renewing the lease after having received Rs 624 for the same purpose only two years before. The Moplah, unable to comply with these demands, was apparently sued in court, evicted from his holding and ruined by court costs of Rs 800.[81]

Logan himself was in no doubt that such complaints accurately reflected the pressure the Malabar tenants were under in a situation favouring the taking of competition rents. In 1884 he remarked that "these poverty-stricken people scramble for every bit of land thrown into the market" even offering "rents in excess... of the

79 W. Francis, **Census of India, 1901,** Vol XV-A, pp 231-33; J. Chartres Molony, **Census of India, 1911,** Vol XII, Part 2, pp 140-42.

80 A **para** was a capacity measure varying in value from place to place.

81 Petition 333, Register of Petitions Received, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Special Commission, 1881-82,** Vol III, p 56.

gross produce they can ever hope to reap off their holdings".[82] Even those who were much less sympathetic to the Malabar tenant than Logan had to agree with him in substance. A later Collector, A. F. Pinhey, considered that it was the rule in Malabar for **jenmis** to rack-rent.[83] In 1885, the pro-**jenmi** Madras Chief Justice, Sir Charles Turner, conceded that rents and other dues in Malabar were, "by reason of the operation of the law of competition oppressive", at least for the less substantial tenants.[84] Even **jenmis** themselves could be open about the effects of tenant competition for leases. One group of landlords stated in 1888 that such competition was largely responsible for what they described as "the increased frequency of evictions" in Malabar. These **jenmis** also recorded their opinion that the "great majority of the cultivating tenants of Malabar" were "insolvent cottiers living from hand to mouth".[85]

British administrations, by permitting the **jenmi** to take from his tenants as much as the market would permit, had introduced a conception of landlord rights, described as "secur[ing] to the Natives the full disposal of their property",[86] conflicting sharply with what the Malabar tenant considered legitimate. The "different intelligent Natives" interrogated by Major Walker at the beginning of the nineteenth century were categorical that the **jenmi** might not raise the **patom** ('rent') fixed on the land.[87] On paddy

82 Note by Logan, 23 July 1884, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures**, p 175.

83 Pinhey to Sec. to Court of Wards, 21 March 1904, MCWP No 79, 21 September 1905, p 93.

84 Turner, **Minute on Malabar Land Tenures**, p 111.

85 "Petition of the Valia Thamburathi of Keyake Covilagam and other Jenmies of Malabar", 28 January 1888, MLP No 11; 27 January 1888, pp 16-19.

86 Capt. A. Walker, Military Secretary, to General Stuart, 24 August 1799, **Wellesley Papers**, Add. 13682, p 103. Walker, one of the most outstanding figures in the early British administration of Malabar (see below, Chapter 2), became the author in 1801 of a classic work on Malabar land rights (see Bibliography).

87 "Account of Malabar", Section 10, **Walker Papers**, 184c9, p 592.

land in particular (from which the annual crop out-turn was liable to little fluctuation) 'rents', up to the early period of British rule, remained unchanged for periods of a century or more.[88] In 1801 Major Walker in a famous treatise on Malabar land tenures described the way in which 'rents' in Malabar were determined according to fixed customary shares between the **jenmi** and the 'tenant' in the estimated net produce of the plot in question.[89] In fact some four decades later one government servant found that "the prescriptive **jenmi-pattom** ['landlord's rent'] of a great portion of the landed property...in South Malabar still lived in the villagers' memories".[90] Even in 1881-82 W. Logan, during his investigations as commissioner, still found "how familiar even the most illiterate of the agriculturalists" were with the shares of the produce due respectively to landlord and tenant according to custom, and that they could usually "say at once what the shares are of any particular bit of land... though the shares now actually paid as 'rent' are very much greater".[91]

It is true that Logan was one of the foremost of the "pro-tenant" school of British officials in Malabar whose views were strongly challenged by those administrators more sympathetic to the **jenmi** interest. These latter argued that rents and other **jenmis**' dues had been determined by contract long before the coming of British rule to the district. However, one of the most emphatic of the pro-**jenmi** officials, J. A. Thorne, on assuming control of the estate of the Zamorin of Calicut as collector under the Court of Wards, discovered from estate records that, "Every field of wet land in the Zamorin's estate (had) its

88 Thomas Warden, Malabar Collector to Board of Revenue, 20 April 1815, MBRP, 1 May 1815, p 4328.

89 Major A. Walker, **The Land Tenures of Malabar, Report of 20 July 1801**, p 14.

90 Note by Sir William Robinson on Collection of Documents appended to Commissioner's Report, 16 June 1882, appendix G (2), Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures Committee Report**, pp 88-89. Robinson was recollecting his experiences in the period when he first served in Malabar in the 1840s.

91 "Report on Malabar Land Tenures", **loc cit**, p xxviii.

'**purathana** (ancient) **janmapattam**' fixed—that is to say, the amount which the Zamorin (claimed) as his due on the land."[92] Moreover even Sir Charles Turner, the most outstanding champion of the **jenmi** cause, was obliged to concede in his cogent **Minute on Malabar Land Tenures** (1885):

> "I do not mean to say that custom was excluded by contract, but that written contracts **made in reference to custom** were generally if not universally adopted in dealings respecting land."[93] (Emphasis mine)

No one, even among the apologists for the **jenmi**, seems ever to have argued that the determination of rents purely and simply with reference to what the market would bear was anything other than an innovation of British rule. Long after the British assumed control of Malabar, virtue in a **jenmi** was still being reckoned in terms of any traditionalist resistance to the temptation to take a competition rent or renewal fee. In a petition of 1887 a large group of inhabitants of Ernad and Walluvanad pressed their conviction that in "former times, the landlords of Malabar did not either evict their tenants or enhance the rent of their property as long as the latter satisfied the customary demands of the former".[94] In 1918 one **jenmi** source was prepared to "endorse the sentiment that a profiteering insistence by **jenmis** on their rights is opposed to custom and unfair to the tenants". It was admitted that Malayali custom enjoined on the **jenmi** that his tenant's "ancient **pattam**-profit should not be curtailed" but that "every person acting in the capacity of a janmi is now suspect(ed)" of defiance of such local custom.[95] Another group of **jenmis** in a startlingly candid petition of 1888 contrasted the pre-

92 J. A. Thorne, Estate Collector, Zamorin's Estate to Sec., to Commissioner, Court of Wards, MRP No 3121, 4 September 1918, p 2.

93 Pp 28-29.

94 "Petition of Achir Tatikazil Moiden of Malabar Amsham, Walawanad Taluk, and 59 others (inhabitants of Ernad and Walluvanad), 22 September 1887, an abstract translation", MLP No 23, 11 March 1888, p 21.

95 J. A. Thorne, Collector, Zamorin's Estate to Sec., Commissioner to Court of Wards, **loc cit**, p 24.

British period with the "vigorous competition for lands which now exists" observing that whereas in "former times the jenmi had little inducement to turn out a tenant... at the present day... the jenmi is exposed to pecuniary temptations which sorely try his traditionary spirit of respecting the possession of long-standing tenants". When the same petitioners naively asked, "Surely the jenmies do not deserve to be blamed for this?",[96] they were evidently not fully informed of the anti-**jenmi** feelings of the Ernad Moplah who with 83 others petitioned government in 1887 on behalf of the Malabar tenants who were said to "suffer a good deal of hardship" at **jenmi** hands. Significantly these same petitioners indicated their estimation of the shared responsibility for the condition of the tenant when they threatened that if a favourable order were not obtained they could not "but attribute" their "miseries to Her Majesty the Queen".[97]

British administration in Malabar had conferred on the **jenmi** what the Moplah tenant saw as unjust powers of land-ownership, was extremely reluctant, despite the advice of many of its own servants most familiar with the district, to legislate to curb the exercise of those powers and on the contrary was prepared to use the most exceptional repressive legislation to suppress the challenge to that power. Little wonder then, that almost throughout the nineteenth century the Ernad Moplah showed little inclination to rely on appeals to justice from the administration for curbing landlord power. A British District Superintendent of Police with much experience of Malabar towards the end of the century noted that the Ernad Moplahs had "an insane idea that Europeans hate them and want to destroy them".[98] The countervailing force

96 "Petition of the Valia Thamburathi of Keyake Covilagam and other Jenmies of Malabar to Secretary, Legislative Council, 28 January 1888", MLP No 11, 27 January 1888, p 16.

97 "Petition of Katangal Virankutti and 83 others, inhabitants of Ernad, 7 October 1887", MLP No 1, 10 January 1888, p 1.

98 Report of Fawcett, 5 June 1896, **loc cit,** p 112. For an examination of the strained relations between the Moplah and the British see Chapter 2.

against **jenmi** power had to be one generated by the tenants and labourers themselves.

The creation of such a force would seem necessarily to involve making the main resource of these groups, their superior numbers, a reality by combination. In Malabar circumstances made this especially difficult. Not only was the bulk of the rural population illiterate[99] and engaged in work which confined relations with others within a very narrow compass,[100] but they also inhabited a district of isolated houses in which even the degree of human interaction which life in a nucleated village normally fostered was apparently lacking. Moreover, the isolation of the typical inhabitant of rural Malabar would be increased by the notoriously poor means of communication in the district (especially in the wild, less thickly populated country in the heart of the outbreak zone) as well as by poverty.

For the muslim section of the population however an important compensating factor for these obstacles to combination would have been its unsegregated structure of religious association (especially its congregational form of worship) as compared with that of the Malayali hindus. This must have been partly responsible for the greater sense of intra-community solidarity and, therefore, independence from local non-muslim authority of the Moplah often remarked by the British in Malabar. Certainly, among the many uses made of the mosque by outbreak participants, its utility as an aid to confederation emerges clearly in many outbreaks. With most disturbances each band of **shahid** was drawn largely from single mosque congregations from which, indeed, on occasions, the gang proceeded directly to commit the initial act of blood. It is known that the leader of the December 1884 outbreak had, sometime before it was perpetrated, made a solemn

99 Even by 1921 only 12.68 per cent of the total Malabar population and 6.2 per cent of the Moplahs were literate, G. T. Boag, **Census of India, 1921,** Vol XIII, Pt I, pp 124 and 127.

100 In the 1860s it required only two or three coolies for the extremely laborious job of preparing land for rice cultivation (J. Cameron, **Report on the Village of Chevayur, 1866,** para 9).

oath to become a **shahid** before the congregation of Churott mosque from which his confederates were largely recruited and which displayed active sympathy with the 'fanatics' whilst the government force was giving chase.[101] In the case of the quasi-outbreak at Kizhumuri in June 1884 the plotters for a month before the attack took to sleeping in their mosque, constantly praying together and planning the project in an upper-storey room.[102] In 1894 it was reported that details of the plot which came to fruition in the outbreak of that year were arranged in Vellangad mosque in eastern Ernad.[103] The 1885 Ponmundam outbreak was plotted at a mosque after services by members of one congregation who are said to have attained a level of organisation involving the passing of resolutions and the collecting of subscriptions to meet expenses.[104] Even when British officials were led to assume a different basis for the Moplah confederation which was normally the necessary organisational preliminary to the outbreak, it seems highly likely that the conjecture was fallacious. Thus, in the case of an abortive outbreak in March 1884, the assertion of one of those responsible for the investigation of the disturbance that the mere fact of the two participants being neighbours afforded them "every opportunity for meeting and discussing" the outbreak plot seems questionable, especially when it is considered that they lived almost half a mile apart in the wild and jungly **amsom** of Chembrasseri. On the other hand the significance for purposes of combination of the fact that both men attended the same mosque seems to have escaped the official concerned.[105]

101 W. Logan, Malabar Magistrate, to Chief Sec., 7 February 1885, MJP Nos 1169-74, 2 May 1885, p 10.

102 Report of J. Twigg, Acting Special Asst. Collector, Malabar, 9 July 1884, MJP Nos 2776-81, 1 November 1884, p 3.

103 H. Bradley, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 14 June 1894, MJP Nos 2186-92, 8 September 1894, p 126.

104 P. Karunakara Menon, Deputy Magistrate, Southern Division to Logan, 1 July 1885, MJP No 2725, 8 October 1885, p 6.

105 V. A. Brodie, Acting Head Asst. Magistrate, Malabar, to

It would also appear that the congregational form of worship of the Moplahs could actually work as a factor encouraging a re-arrangement of the traditional dispersed settlement pattern of Malabar. Thus it has been observed that, whereas the Malabar hindus have "small houses each with its own compound spread over the countryside with no communal centre", the Moplah "tends to live in close villages and hamlets centred on his mosque."[106] This greater tendency of Moplahs to live in closer proximity to one another must be attributed also to the fact that, unlike most hindu castes of Malabar, Moplahs quite commonly engaged in trade, often of an extremely petty nature and supplementing income from agricultural work. In 1921 the percentage of Moplah workers engaged in trade in foodstuffs (except fish) and bazaar trade (the two major categories of trade in the Census returns) was 11.1, higher than that of any major hindu caste in the district.[107] Rural Moplahs not infrequently lived in 'streets' of houses forming the local bazaar. Of course such nucleation of settlement was itself an indication of the higher pitch of human intercourse commerce entailed compared with the form of agriculture practised in Malabar. In fact it would seem that assembly on a purely secular basis intruded regularly into the seclusion of the life of the lower orders in the south Malabar interior almost solely through such traffic. Significantly, the promotion of association through the market-place was an intermittent feature of the history of the "fanatic zone" Moplah in the outbreak period. It was at fairs in Ernad such as that of Wandur that the celebrated Moplah malefactor Athan Gurikal[108] exercised the magisterial authority he had as-

C. A. Galton, Malabar Magistrate, 24 May 1884, MJP Nos 1605-11, 2 July 1884, pp 19 and 34, MRO.

106 Comments by E. H. Colebrooke, who as a police officer played an important part in the suppression of the 1921-22 rebellion, on Mr. Hitchcock's Report on the same, n.d., **Mss. Eur. F161,** box 4, p 2.

107 G. T. Boag, **Census of India, 1921,** Vol XIII, Pt 1, pp 216-22.

108 See p 55.

sumed to himself.[109] The **Mussaliars** (a kind of Moplah **moulvi** or muslim divine) who broadcast the order of Syed Fazl, the Mambram **Tangal**, that no Moplah should show deference to high-caste hindus in the choice of form of the second person in speech[110] found the market-place a more suitable pulpit than the mosque for publishing a message not solely intended for muslim ears.[111] Even recruitment to bands of **shahid** might not have been unaffected by the facilities bazaars provided for human contact. Thus it seems significant that all participants in the outbreak of 1873, as well as in a putative plot to "go out" in 1879, lived in Toothakal bazaar, Paral **amsom.**[112] Moreover, it is certain that the final decision of a considerable number of members of the large gang of 1896 to become **shahid** was taken in direct consequence of confabulation at the weekly Wandur **shandy** (market) on 25 February in that year.[113] Similarly, an attempt to recruit **shahid** for the February-March 1915 outbreak seems to have been made at one particular annual **nercha** or religious festival which, attracting thousands of Moplahs every year, had "degenerated into nothing more or less than a fair".[114]

Even so, the role of exchange in the fostering of combination among rural Moplahs was probably, as the above instances suggest, merely supplementary to that of religion. The kind of Moplah most exposed to the former influence, the man whose source of income was primarily trade, would not normally be so exposed to the full direct power of the **jenmi** and made only the most sporadic ap-

109 W. Robinson, Head Asst. Magistrate to Conolly, Malabar Magistrate, 18 October 1849, MJP No 794, 1 December 1849, p 4865.

110 See below p 88.

111 Examination of Cootussa, the Ernad **Tahsildar**, before T. L. Strange, 11 May 1852, MJP No 154, 16 March 1853, p 1675.

112 A. MacGregor, Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 26 September 1873, MJP No 1575, 1 October 1873, p 1012.

113 Report of H. M. Winterbotham, 5 May 1896, MJP No 1567, 30 September 1896, p 53.

114 R. H. Hitchcock, Supt. of Police, South Malabar, "Report on the Mappilla Outbreak of 1915", 30 March 1915, MJP Nos 2080-84, 3 September 1915 (Conf.), Kozhikode Archives, p 63.

pearance in the ranks of outbreak participants. Indeed, in 1849 District Magistrate Conolly expressed the opinion that the Moplah trading community of Malappuram, deep in the "fanatic zone", was remarkable for its tranquillity in the midst of its fanatic rustic neighbours.[115] Of the 99 **shahids** of 1896 only one was found to be in trade and this "petty bazaarman"[116] may well have been a member of one of the myriad Ernad Moplah families drawing sustenance from a combination of petty hawking, coolie work, small-scale cultivation and the like. Although such families **did** contribute considerably to outbreak bands it seems certain that with the low level of commercial activity which, at least until the twentieth century,[117] characterised the south Malabar interior, trade could not be crucial in promoting the confederation necessary for resisting the growth of **jenmi** power. Administrators and others in the earliest period of British rule had been struck by the paucity of fixed facilities for marketing in the rural hinterland of Malabar. Moreover, despite the remedial efforts of certain early collectors, as late as 1894 it was observed that important weekly markets at which the surplus produce from the land could be sold were few and far between.[118] The Moplahs (and others) from the more affluent coastal towns who scoured the countryside for custom appear to have engrossed the wholesale trade in grain, coconuts, areca and pepper. In consequence, the bazaar trade in Malabar was characterised by the retailing of salt fish, vegetables, curry stuffs, glass bangles etc. by petty and often ephemeral shopkeepers. The ramifications of com-

115 Conolly to Acting Sec., Judicial, 11 December 1849, MJP No 850, 18 December 1849, p 5995.

116 J. T. Gillespie, Acting Special Asst. Magistrate to Malabar Magistrate, 26 April 1896, MJP No 1567, 30 September 1896, pp 38-47.

117 See below p 148.

118 H. Moberly, Special Settlement Officer, Malabar and South Canara to Sec., Commissioner of Revenue Settlement and Director of Land Records and Agriculture, 24 May 1894, MRP No 883, 29 August 1900, pp 836 and 1033.

merce in the south Malabar interior were neither as widespread nor as deeply-rooted in the life of its muslim inhabitants as those of religion. It was through the latter alone that challenge to the power of the **jenmi** could be mounted.

The opportunities for Moplahs achieving a greater degree of independence from the power network linking hindu **jenmis** and officialdom, and for mounting a challenge to that network, would be increased by the existence of a Moplah **ulema** capable of playing a sanctioning and even a leadership role to the extent that they derived their income from the contributions of the faithful. Indeed, some British officials and many Malayali hindus went so far as to ascribe an originating or manipulative function to the Moplah **Tangals** who were alleged by the administrator in 1896 to "have been at the bottom of most of the outbreaks".[119]

There is certainly plenty of evidence of Moplah divines sanctioning and, sometimes (as in August 1849 and 1873) actually leading outbreaks. Apparently, it was Syed Fazl's favourite text in his Friday orations at the mosque at Mambram, where he was the leading **Tangal** from 1844 to 1852, that it was no sin but a merit to kill a **jenmi** who evicted.[120] It was clearly necessary for intending **shahid** to have religious sanction for their taking the path of 'martyrdom' through the violence of the outbreak, and it was deemed most important to receive the blessing of the Mambram **Tangal**, or of some other Moplah divine before "going out".

This dispensation to commit homicide in the name of Islam came very often to be retailed ceremonially through one of the two traditional Moplah votive rites known as the **nercha** and the **maulud.** A **nercha** was a vow-taking

119 Minute of J. Grose, member, Council of Governor of Madras 18 August 1896, MJP No 1567, 30 September 1896, p 131.

120 Information given by C. Kanaran, late Deputy Collector Malabar, to W. Logan, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Special Commission**, 1881-82, Vol II, p 48. Kanaran had immediate charge of the negotiations resulting in Syed Fazl's departure for Arabia.

ceremony, whilst a **maulud** was, for the Ernad Moplah, a kind of **nercha** usually meant to be celebrated in honour of some deceased person. The form of these services, in which the devotee might secure the vouchsafing both of the success of his mission and of a place in paradise, was well-suited to the purposes of the Moplah preparing to become an outbreak participant. However the significance of the adaptation of the **nercha** and the **maulud** to the requirements of the Moplah outbreak did not consist only in the consecrating function of these rites. The vital need for unwavering adhesion to a course of action which for success had to culminate in the slaughter in hand-to-hand combat of each and every participant was supplied by the votive aspect of the ceremonial. It was a deadly sin to draw back from the commitment undertaken in the eyes of God and his witnesses.[121]

But if the **nercha** or **maulud** became an oath-taking ceremony for the intending **shahid**, their transaction during the rite with the officiating Moplah divine was not confined to the giving and receiving of religious sanction. The oblatory aspect of the use of traditional Moplah ceremony by the outbreak participant was an indication that the dependence on priestly dispensation of the man intending to "go out" made him no mere creature of the **ulema.** Where their source of livelihood was from the Moplah community, the dependence of the **Tangals** on the population supporting outbreaks was as great as that of the intending martyr on the **Tangals.**

In fact, where documentary evidence of some reliability is available to illuminate the relationship between the **ulema** and their Moplah congregations, there emerges a picture quite different from that painted by those officials most convinced of the evil power of the former over the

121 Logan to Chief Sec., 7 February 1885, MJP Nos 1169-74, 2 May 1885, p 13. Compliance with the resolution to die as a **shahid** was also encouraged by the contempt shown by the entire Moplah community for the **minjina shahid**, the devotee who failed to carry through his resolve. Report of Fawcett, 5 June 1896, **loc cit,** p 103.

latter. There seems little doubt that the power of each Moplah divine tended to be confined to a highly localised jurisdiction ultimately dependent on the goodwill and material support of his following. As early as 1800-01 it had been noted by one acute observer that in south Malabar the Moplah 'clergy' was generally supported entirely by the contributions of their followers.[122] The enquiry into the outbreak of February 1915 revealed that in the 'fanatical' south Malabar interior **Mussaliars** were chosen and fed by the Moplahs of the locality where they held sway.[123] It was also reported, in 1896, that the appointment of a Moplah mullah vested in the congregation he was to serve.[124] In the specific instance of Edapetta in Walluvanad **taluk** for example, it was discovered that the Angadipuram **Tangal**, who was supposed to exercise "some vague sort of supervision" over the religious affairs of the **amsom**, was, in 1911, able to remove its **kazi** only with the consent and approval of the local mosque congregation.[125] No less a figure than the religious head of the majority section[126] of the Moplah community, the Makhdum **Tangal** of Ponnani, outside of a comparatively small part of Ponnani **taluk**, had no disciplinary authority over either mosque congregations or their officials. Among the Moplahs there was, as Collector C. A. Innes put it, nothing equivalent to a church with church discipline and church organisation.[127] Even where the fame of a Moplah divine secured him adherents beyond the purely local realm, his dependence on his following could still be most marked. This indeed appears to have been the case with the Mambram **Tangals** them-

122 Francis Buchanan, **A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar,** Vol II, p 422.

123 R. H. Hitchcock, Supt. of Police, South Malabar, "Report on the Mappilla Outbreak of 1915", 30 March 1915, **loc cit,** p 69.

124 Report of Winterbotham, 5 May 1896, **loc cit,** p 52.

125 Innes to Sec., Judicial, 29 March 1915, MJP Nos 2080-84 3 September 1915 (Conf.), p 36, Kozhikode Archives.

126 See p 51.

127 Innes to Sec.. Judicial, 29 March 1915, **loc cit,** p 36.

selves who were reported to have had "no apparent property" but professed to be **fakirs** and were supported by "the voluntary oblations of their followers".[128] If it were really true, as claimed by Special Commissioner T. L. Strange,[129] that the doctrine of the Moplah outbreak had originated with the Mambram **Tangals**, they were catering for the needs of their adherents. As District Magistrate W. Logan observed in 1885 of the Moplah priesthood generally:

> "They are so circumstanced that, to retain their hold on the people and to secure the comfortable incomes derived from them, they are forced to go with them in this popular movement."[130]

It was not the Moplah laity which was much inhibited in the pursuit of what was considered to be in the interests of the community by the ties binding Moplah congregations to the **ulema.** This is often suggested by the history of Moplah 'fanaticism'. In the 1880s a group of Ernad Moplahs, in collision with their **jenmi** over their acquisition of a mosque site, found that, after applying to "several Arab priests" for their ruling on the question of the inviolate sanctity of the mosque, the opinion was that it might be removed if ordered by the king. This verdict proved so unpalatable to those who had asked for it that "they tore up the paper publicly in the village street to show their contempt for the ruling."[131] Moreover, instances sometimes occurred in which outbreak participants refused to heed the appeals of **Tangals** to surrender.[132] The Moplah laity was indeed very often more

128 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 4 November 1843, MJP No 69, 27 January 1844, p 197.

129 Strange to Conolly, 29 July 1852, MJP No 154, 16 March 1853, p 1610.

130 Logan to Chief Sec., 17 July 1885, MJP No 2725, 8 October 1885, p 7.

131 Logan, "Report on Malabar Land Tenures", loc cit, Vol 1, pp lxxii-lxxiii. For the secular aspect of the Moplah's attitude to the mosque see below p 149.

132 See for example H. D. Cook, Head Asst. Magistrate to Conolly, 28 December 1843, MJP No 69, 27 January 1844, p 272.

radical than the **ulema** in its attachment to and interpretation of what the British supposed to be a movement initiated by the old Mambram **Tangal** (Syed Fazl's father). When, in 1852, Syed Fazal issued an injunction that, for the better observance of the Sabbath, there should be no ploughing on Fridays by Moplahs, some of his followers went beyond his instructions and broke the ploughs of Nairs who would not cease work.[133] Another of the **Tangal**'s orders, that every Moplah should use the polite form of the second person when conversing with Nairs only when the latter used the same, was similarly exceeded. As Conolly noted

> "The low Moplah, never over-courteous in his manner, is pleased at an order which brings (as he thinks) his superiors in rank and education to his own low level"

and resorted to the familiar in response to either form.[134] Most significant of all, on the occasion, in 1852, of Syed Fazl's final removal from Malabar, which officials had thought might result in a rising of 5000 Moplahs and which in fact was marked by a crowd of 7 to 8,000 "showing strong signs of grief at his departure", the **Tangal**'s behaviour was "prudent and polite". He "did all that was in his power to avoid popular excitement by remaining in his house" out of sight of the crowds for as long as possible, even altering his itinerary and retrieving a perilous situation as the gathering swelled with each mile.[135]

Consciousness of the might of the ruling power was capable of encouraging such notable caution on the part of a divine like Syed Fazl, as notorious for his militancy as those on whom he was dependent. It is not surprising therefore that, where, from the first, the Moplah priesthood had acknowledged British supremacy by securing a substantial annual retainer, it showed a discrimination in matters

133 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 11 February 1852, MJP No 125, 20 February 1852, p 696.

134 Ibid, pp 694-95.

135 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 20 March 1852, MJP No 216, 26 March 1852, pp 1154-55.

of sedition which was legendary. At the earliest stage of British rule in Malabar an undertaking of loyal adhesion to the government interest was secured from the influential **Tangal** of Kondotti in western Ernad by the grant of a remission of land revenue dues worth Rs 2,734 per annum. In the time of the rule of Tippu Sultan in Malabar, the Kondotti **Tangal**, "in consideration of his sanctity as pretended but really to bind the Mappillas by his means to the Cirkar (Government)", had obtained the elimination of his lands from the revenue accounts. After 1792 "it was thought expedient to assure (the **Tangal**) that whilst he evinced himself attached to the Company" by trying "to keep the Mappillas obedient the indulgence shown him by Tippu" would not be forfeited.[136] In fact, practically throughout the subsequent period of British rule, successive Kondotti **Tangals** proved to be astute enough always to impress the authorities with their devotion to the Raj. The fact that the Kondotti **Tangals** derived a substantial income from the government gave them an important degree of independence from the will of their followers which other Ernad divines did not possess. Indeed, since many of the adherents of the Kondotti **Tangals** were tenants on their **inam**[137] lands it was the **Tangals** themselves who held the levers of control. In the period 1836-1919 the Kondotti **Tangals** were generally successful in ensuring that none of their adherents were implicated in the periodic Moplah outbreaks in the suppression of which the Kondotti faction indeed sometimes participated. Certainly Kondotti faction Moplahs were normally exempted from the fining under the Moplah Act of **amsoms** implicated in outbreaks. Under such circumstances relations were strained with the rest of the Moplah population of interior south

136 W. G. Farmer, Malabar Supravisor, to J. Stevens, Supt., Southern Districts, 2 October 1793, enclosure in R. B. Wood, Acting Collector, Malabar to Sec., Commissioners of Land Revenue, 6 January 1910, MRP No 490, 14 February 1910, p 66.

137 **Inams** were assignments of government rights in land. In Malabar, where land was very largely private property, **inams** were usually assignments of the government assessment.

Malabar, sometimes called the ('Ponnani faction') from their nominal allegiance to the Valiya Jaratingal **Tangal** of Ponnani, which anathematised the Kondotti Moplahs as Shiahs, a term rejected by the latter. In fact any doctrinal differences between the two factions appear to have been minimal and the attraction of the Kondotti sect was more especially to those Ernad Moplahs whose interests dictated a less reckless method of attempting to resolve grievance than via the 'fanatical' outbreak. The Kondotti faction would appear to have provided a home for many of the more well-to-do Moplahs,[138] a small minority in Ernad. The sect was never able to attract more than a relatively small proportion of the total Muslim population of interior south Malabar. In 1853 the Kondotti Moplahs amounted to what was estimated to have been 30,000 souls, some 20-25 per cent of the Muslim population of the "fanatic zone".[139] Two decades later 14.9 per cent of the Muslims of Ernad were returned in the 1871 census as 'Shiahs', this presumably being taken as equivalent to 'Kondotti Moplahs'. Most of the sect were in fact concentrated in and around Kondotti itself where the **Tangal's inam** lands were located.[140] When the British bought the Kondotti Tangal they made certain of the loyalty of only a small proportion of the 'fanatic zone' Moplahs, for the great majority of whom, on the contrary, financial control of the **ulema** in their own hands provided a means of promoting confederation against the officially-sustained **jenmi** power.

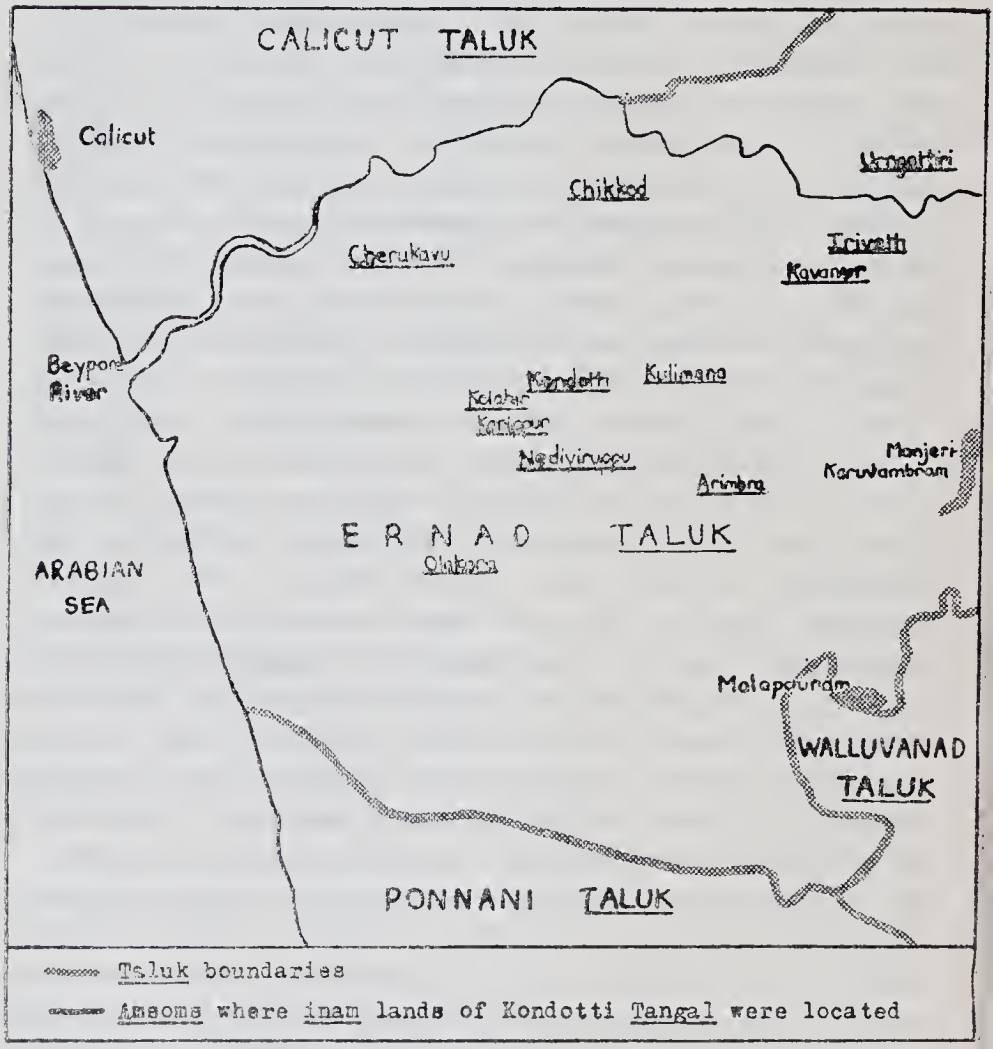
Nevertheless, there existed important limits to the facility with which even the Moplah tenantry could combine without external assistance. Most **ulema**, especially in interior south Malabar, had a level of economic standing and a range of experience and contact which was little

138 Conolly to Register, Court of Foujdaree Udalut (Chief Criminal Court), Madras, 11 December 1849, MJP No 19A, 11 January 1850, p 388.

139 Strange to Sec., Judicial, 25 September 1852, MJP No 483, 23 August 1853, p 4595.

140 See map p 52.

MAP TO SHOW THE LOCATION OF THE INAM LANDS OF THE KONDOTTI TANGAL[1]



1 Title deeds given to Ishtiyak Shah Valiya Tangal of Kondotti in 1866, enclosure in R.B. Wood, Acting Collector Malabar to Secretary, Revenue, 16 Sept. 1909, MRP No. 490, 14 Feb. 1910, pp. 3-5.

different from that of the rural mass. On the other hand, nearly all those who did stand out in these respects and who might therefore be more likely to attract a considerable following, the important Tangals of the towns and

religious centres in the coastal zone, were primarily in contact with the coastal Moplahs. These were a more prosperous commercial community having, the British were sure, "no sympathy with the Moplah agriculturalist".[141] Whilst this estimate is doubtless exaggerated, it is certainly true that the Moplahs of the coastal towns had little to gain and, after the promulgation of the Moplah acts, a good deal about which to be apprehensive from the effects of the Moplah outbreak. Thus in 1894, in a fatwa (judgement) condemning that year's outbreak, a **kazi** of **Calicut** laid emphasis on the fact that the urban areas of the coast were free from these disturbances, which occurred only in the rural interior where the muslims were less "respectable".[142]

The second important limitation to the extent to which Moplahs were likely to combine on anything more than the most fleeting basis was probably the size of mosque congregations. According to Moplah belief it would appear that a quorum of 40 people was essential for a congregation in a principal mosque.[143] In fact, figures for 1831 and 1851 seem to indicate an average of the order of 400 Moplahs per mosque for Malabar as a whole.[144] Probably the figure would be smaller for rural areas like the outbreak zone. With possibly no more than a hundred or so adult males per congregation, it would seem that the religion of the Moplahs normally promoted a degree of regular intercourse sufficient for combination on only a limited, localised scale.

It would seem likely that combination on such a scale would present a strictly limited range of alternative forms of action against **jenmi** power. There is plenty of evidence of resistance to the payment of rent among Moplah tenant

141 H. Wigram, Officiating District Judge, South Malabar, to Chief Sec., 8 November 1883, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures**, p 17.

142 Fathwa of Mussapla Akath Mulla Koya Tangal, Kazi of Calicut, MJP Nos 2186-92, 8 September 1894, p 123.

143 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 24 July 1852, MJP No 44, 24 July 1852, p 3158.

144 Report of Strange, 25 September 1852, **loc cit**, p 4593.

communities when labouring under a sense of grievance. The records of the Guruvayur Devaswom section of the Zamorin's estate, which was under Court of Wards administration for several years from 1914, resound with the complaints of Estate Collectors about amsoms of Ernad Moplah tenants "notorious for default in the payment of rent".[145] How readily Moplah tenants might act in concert was revealed by Logan. He noted at the outset of his Commission in 1881, "signs that the Mappilla portion of the population would have readily seized any pretext for stopping the payment of rent, and if such a movement had been once commenced, the example would have spread contagiously". But such apparently spontaneous largescale coordinations (as with the huge crowds which gathered when Syed Fazl left Malabar) seem to have been transient, unstable phenomena in the absence of a level of organisation which the unaided rural Moplah of the outbreak zone was incapable of achieving. Logan evidently found no great difficulty in scotching such movements with cautions whenever they appeared.[146] Under conditions in which British power seemed ever ready and able to intervene in strength it would appear that the forms of anti-jenmi action generated by the Ernad Moplahs themselves had of necessity to be those involving the mobilisation of relatively small numbers.

Combination on this limited scale produced forms of action, varieties of 'normal' crime especially, which are common to perhaps any rural society in which mass organisation is not feasible. A proportion of crime in Malabar, especially crimes of violence, certainly had its origin in agrarian trouble. Apart from common murder of local notables by small groups, such as three Moplahs who in 1865 killed an importunate moneylender,[147] Moplahs supplied most of the gang robbers (dacoits) of the district. In

145 Administration report for fasli (harvest year) 1330 (1920-21), 11 October 1921, MCWP No 44, 16 November 1921, p 1.

146 Logan, "Report on Malabar Land Tenures", loc cit, vol I, p iv.

147 Judgement, High Court of Judicature, Madras, 21 October 1865, Case No 166, 1865, MJP No 1550, 31 October 1865, p 1903.

times of dearth **dacoities** would be committed by starving people for food, as in 1897 when one British official observed that "the Mappillas, who suffered the most by far, are not those to sit down under that kind of adversity which consists in starvation while fat Hindu landlords had plenty".[148] At least one outstanding example of what E. J. Hobsbawm has called "social banditry"[149] is recorded with the case of Manjeri Athan Gurikal, grandson of a Moplah of the same name who had led a rebellion against the British at the beginning of the century.[150] This second Athan Gurikal was an idle young man of a Moplah family of status in greatly reduced circumstances. Of "athletic figure, and of much resolution and pride",[151] he secured a living for his gang by levying "protection money" from rich **jenmis,** but also set himself up as a champion of the oppressed Moplahs, amongst whom he enjoyed great prestige. Thus among the Robin Hood-style "righting of wrongs" attributed to the Gurikal[152] include action against a **menon** (village accountant) who had refused to refund a Rs 30 bribe he had received from a Moplah woman and against an **adhigari** for allegedly wronging a Moplah over a revenue matter.[153]

But, throughout the period, Moplah resistance to the rural establishment constantly gravitated towards the form of the outbreak. The persistence of the outbreak as the chief form of action may well have been because it entailed the wreaking of the maximum degree of terror with the minimum resources, for nothing was more chilling to the local hindus than the thought of frenzied fanatics for whom death not only held no fears but was eagerly sought. Perhaps it was partly because "the Moplah [was] only

148 F. Fawcett, Supt. of Police, Malabar, to Insp.-Gen. of Police, 28 January 1898, MJP No 819, 25 May 1898, p 90.

149 **Primitive Rebels,** p 5.

150 See Chapter 2.

151 Report of Strange, 25 September 1852, **loc cit,** p 4548.

152 The term signifies a teacher in the use of arms, a marksman, and this was indeed Athan Gurikal's calling.

153 Report of Robinson, 18 October 1849, **loc cit,** pp 4867 and 4873.

formidable when under the effects of fanaticism"[154] that the despised coolie and abused tenant was attracted to such a suicidal form of action in which even war-like Nairs in possession of arms "rushed into the jungle, climbed trees, and ... descended into wells leaving their wives and children and their property at the mercy of [a] gang" of outbreak participants.[155] Certainly the terrorisation of the hindu was not merely an incidental effect of the outbreak as far as the Ernad Moplah was concerned. This seems to have been the import of the remark of one of the participants in the February-March 1915 outbreak to a Tier in Alanallur bazaar who, instead of bolting at the approach of the 'fanatics' merely turned aside into the jungle to let them pass. The **shahid** is reported to have demanded of him "Don't you know who we are?" and slashed him with his sword.[156] As the government of Madras commented about the same time, the Moplah derived real satisfaction "from his power to reduce the local Hindus to a state of nervousness."[157]

However, the main strength of the outbreak form was that the inevitable death of all the participants meant that direct retaliation by the powerful was made impossible. As long as men could be found who preferred to life the rewards of Paradise and the posthumous acclaim of the Ernad Moplah community, a means of resistance could be employed which was not subject to the main disadvantage of other forms of action, like common murder, dacoity and "social banditry", in which relatively small, and therefore vulnerable, numbers were involved. Of course, there was the danger that the families of those who died as **shahid** might suffer retaliation at the hands of local magnates and officials. In fact, those who had participated in

154 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 29 November 1851, **Moplah Outrages Correspondence**, Vol I, p 223.

155 Report of H. Bradley, Acting Magistrate, Malabar, 16 May 1894, MJP Nos 2186-92, 8 September 1894, p 109.

156 Innes to Sec., Judicial, 29 March 1915, **loc cit**, p 15.

157 Chief Sec., Govt. of Madras, Judicial to Sec., Govt. of India, Home, demi-official, conf., 2 March 1915, Fortnightly Reports for 1915, MRO.

the 1896 outbreak claimed that certain female relatives of the **shahid** of 1894 had been ill-treated by **amsom** officials after the outbreak.[158] On the other hand, those who might be tempted to retaliate against the families of **shahid** would have to reflect on the possible consequences of indulging in such revenge. As one of the participants in the 1896 outbreak let it be known before he died:

> "After the last outbreak the Moplah mothers and sisters were insulted... If that happens again the men we have arranged with are ready".[159]

The Moplah outbreak seems to have been essentially a peculiar form of rural terrorism which functioned as what, in the circumstances, was probably the most effective means of curbing the enhanced power of the **jenmi**, for the earthly benefit of Moplahs who themselves did not become participants. As one British official was able to perceive as early as 1843, the outbreak was "organised to strike terror into the Nayrs holding Jenmem property".[160]

Naturally, in the context of the Moplah outbreak, the term "organisation" must not be understood in sophisticated modern terms. Most outbreaks were preceded by a degree of calculation and arrangement giving certain scope for the exercise of an elementary leadership talent. However, the success of such paroxysms of violence depended on the incitation through ceremony and song of a wild spirit of holy wrath drawing on the tradition of the armed vindication of Ernad Islam in the face of high-caste hindu power.[161] The frenzy which was therefore intrinsic to the

158 H. M. Winterbotham to Chief Sec., 5 May 1896, MJP No 1567, 30 September 1896, p 57.

159 Statement of Valiya Mannil Chek, 29 March 1896, reporting the warning of outbreak participant Manjapalli Ahamad Kutti, L/PJ/6/422, 996/96, p 20.

160 H. D. Cook, Head Asst. Magistrate, Malabar to Conolly, 28 December 1843, MJP No 69, 27 January 1844, p 282.

161 This tradition was of course partly the creation of the history of the outbreak itself, see for example "Ballad Composed to Commemorate the events attending the Cutting off [of] the Head of Kapraat Panikar", appendix 6, report of W. Robinson, 18 October 1849, **loc cit**, pp 4821-22 and 4830. However the growth of the tradi-

Moplah outbreak was not conducive to elaborate management. The adventitious element in this form of resistance to **jenmi** power was prominent. This was no more so than in the explication of Moplah grievance via such speech as was possible between outbreak participants and the forces sent against them, and through the occasional 'writings' left by **shahid** in their chosen 'posts'.[162] Even so, the fact that **shahid** cast themselves in the role of defenders of 'Islam', and the local community in which it had expression, created some kind of crude mechanism by which the Moplah outbreak might prove responsive to popular feeling. The fame which was so eagerly sought, and not uncommonly achieved, by the typical **shahid** band, provided some prospect of the outbreak being directed along lines favoured by the Ernad Moplahs at large.

It would be appropriate here to say something about the understanding of the "fanatic zone" Moplah of the religion he professed. The unanimous opinion of those who commented on the question was that the Ernad Moplah's ignorance of Islam was abject.[163] It would certainly not be easy for the Moplahs to obtain accurate knowledge of Islam. Even in 1921 more than 88 per cent of all muslim males in Malabar were illiterate in their native tongue, Malayalam.[164] Religious tracts, of unknown accuracy, were available, at least in the late nineteenth century, in this language.[165] Even so, of all Moplahs, those of the "fanatic zone" were particularly adamant that the Koran itself should be in Arabic,[166] of which there were precisely

tion is traceable back to an even earlier period. See, below pp 106 and 149.

162 See above p 21.

163 See for example Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 17 December 1841, MJP No 37, 8 February 1842, p 352; F. Fawcett, Supt. of Police, Malabar to Insp.-Gen. of Police, 5 June 1896, MJP No 1567, 30 September 1896, p 101.

164 G. T. Boag, **Census of India, 1921**, Vol XIII, Part I, p 125.

165 Logan, **Malabar Manual**, Vol I, p 198.

166 F. Fawcett, Supt. of Police, Malabar, "The Moplas of Malabar", **The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review**, October 1897, p 299.

321 speakers in the whole of the district in 1921.[167] The Moplahs showed little inclination to have access to the authoritative texts of their religion in a form they could understand. As the Superintendent of Police of South Malabar observed in the early 1920s, the Moplah would have Arabic whether he could understand it or not.[168] As far as the "fanatic zone" **ulema** were concerned, it was sometimes recorded that their ignorance of Islam could be almost as gross as those they claimed to instruct.[169] Moreover as noted above,[170] the Ernad Moplah was by no means always ready to accept the rulings of the **ulema** where these were found to be unpalatable. It seems most likely that "fanatic zone" Moplahs were quite free in what they chose to regard as legitimate in the eyes of their religion. The Ernad Moplah's concept of 'Islam' was shaped by the sentiments of the local community rather than by accurate Koranic exegesis. As one observer noted in 1851:

> "It is well known that the poor and ignorant Moplahs of these talooks... derive their notions of religion chiefly from songs, traditions and stories. A composition like the present one [a 'seditious poem' glorifying the August 1849 outbreak], recited, as it would be and as some now are, at large gatherings of the common people, is likely to produce the most pernicious effects. I cannot doubt that many of the fanatics, who have in these various outbreaks thrown away their lives, entirely owed their delusion to such a cause. The doctrines at present held by the lower classes on the subject of martyrdom are just those which this poem would foster and maintain, though it is perfectly well known by all educated Musselmans that they are entirely opposed to the authority of the koran."[171]

167 G. T. Boag, **Census of India, 1921**, Vol XIII, Part II, pp 79-80.

168 R. H. Hitchcock, **A History of the Malabar Rebellion, 1921,** p 175.

169 See for example C. A. Innes, Malabar Magistrate, to Sec., Judicial, 29 March 1915, MJP Nos 2080-84 (Conf.), p 29.

170 p 48.

171 C. Collett, Sub-Collector, Malabar, verdict, Govt. **versus**

The "fanatic zone" Moplah concept of 'Islam' had a strongly social rather than a textual character. In fact, the meaning of the term 'Islam' which most readily sprang to the mind of the ignorant Ernad Moplah seems very often to have been "the local Moplahs and their aspirations". The Ernad Moplah had a marked disposition to conceive 'Islam' in fundamentally communal terms.

* * *

It has been suggested that the outbreak was merely a form of action instigated by the more influential elements among the Moplahs for their own ends. The fact that **shahid** were usually men from the lowest levels of rural society drew from one member of the Madras government of 1851 the following remark:

> "It is not in the ordinary nature of things... that men of this description should originate and take the lead in such acts; they may follow when incited by the example of men of a higher grade or, they may be made the tools of such men, but I cannot look upon these murders as their own spontaneous acts."[172]

In particular it has been claimed that the social conflict of which the outbreak was an expression was "only the culmination of the constant struggle of the wealthy kanamkar to get possession of the land."[173]

Kanamkar or **kanamdars,** held land from **jenmis** for terms of twelve years, making a loan to the **jenmi** at the beginning of this period and recovering the interest on the loan from the annual rent due to the **jenmi,** who received the balance. Some **kanamdars**, such as the family of one outbreak participant in 1851 which held one and a half acres on kanam and also worked as coolies,[174] were clearly

A. Atan Moyi, P. Semamu Moossaliar and Madari Kunjammud, 31 October 1851, **Moplah Outrages Correspondence,** Vol I, p 229.

172 Minute of J. F. Thomas, member, Council of Governor of Madras, 18 October 1851, MJP No 700, 20 November 1851, p 3795.

173 Sir Charles Turner, **Minute on Malabar Land Tenures Draft Bill,** p 60.

174 C. Collett to Conolly, 20 September 1851, MJP No 558, 8 September 1851, p 3732.

of a status little different from the usual 'fanatic'. Others, however, were substantial, powerful men, frequently Moplahs in the outbreak zone, jealous of the **jenmi** land monopoly which was an obstacle to their ambition and, indeed, often the means of their downfall. Moplah **kanamdars** who had gone from relative riches to destitution in a matter of years sometimes became participants in outbreaks.[175] The **kanamdar** certainly had every reason to look with favour on any movement directed against **jenmis**.

Moreover, the evidence for the influential role of **kanamdars** in the Moplah outbreak is strong. They clearly provided the leaders of a number of outbreaks, such as those in August 1849, 1896 and 1919. They were also strongly suspected of instigating or directing others. The **shahid** of 1894 were almost certainly instigated to their work chiefly by one Kalattil Unnian Haji, apparently a substantial **kanamdar** under pressure from his Brahmin **jenmi**, the burning of whose family temple constituted the opening act of violence of the Moplah gang.[176] In September 1880 the outbreak at Melattur was very likely incited by the chief Moplah of the locality, a wealthy **kanamdar** against one of his **jenmis** and the **kariastan** of another at a time when both were in sharp conflict with the Moplah over land rights and dues.[177] As Logan realised,[178] the concept of the outbreak as a weapon used by **kanamdars** in their struggle against expanding **jenmi** power also helps explain the fact that outbreaks did not begin until 1836, several decades after the beginning of British rule (1792).

To some extent the start in 1836 of violent Moplah resistance via the outbreak to the power of the local high-caste Hindu magnates can probably be traced to changes introduced in the previous decade as a result of the Commission in Malabar of H. S. Graeme. Graeme, a judge of

175 **Ibid**, pp 3736-37.

176 H. Bradley, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 16 May 1894, MJP Nos 2186-92, 8 September 1894, pp 97, 102-04.

177 G. McWatters, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 5 October 1880, MJP No 2500, 19 October 1880, pp 1233-35.

178 "Report on Malabar Land Tenures", **loc cit**, Vol I, p xvii.

the Southern Court of Circuit, was deputed in 1818 to investigate the revenue administration of Malabar and introduce a new system of police and magistracy. It was the claim of Logan that the enquiry into actual rents which was recommended by Graeme as a basis for his scheme of settling the revenue assessment on wet cultivation, and which was begun in 1823 and continued intermittently until 1843, was calculated to set landlord and tenant at strife.[179] Indeed, in 1804, the Court of Directors had cautioned the authorities in the district against such investigations which "might perhaps excite jealousies"[180] and lead to embarrassing disturbances at a time when the foundations of British power were still insecure. It is possible that, as Logan argued,[181] the enquiry of 1823-43 into the terms on which lands were rented itself confronted the various interests in the Malabar countryside for the first time with the British regime's innovations in landlord rights. These would only then have begun to be enforced in earnest. However, it seems more likely that the chief reasons for the growth of **jenmi** power in this period lie elsewhere.

A visit to Malabar in 1817 had convinced Sir Thomas Munro, then commissioner for the revision of establishments, of the necessity for creating in the district a system of servants of the government at village level which would be of political advantage to the Company. As Munro put it:

> "Our security requires that we should have a body of Head men of Villages interested in supporting Our Dominion."[182]

From the best-informed inhabitants of the district, Munro gathered that the ancient usage of Malabar had indeed provided for a system of headmen of '**desams**' ('villages') the personnel of which was supplied by the

179 **Ibid.**

180 Court of Directors to Govt. of Madras, 24 August 1804, Revenue Letters to Madras, L/E/3/670, pp 159-60.

181 "Report on Malabar Land Tenures", **loc cit**, Vol 11, pp 46-47.

182 Munro to Chief Sec., n.d., MRP, 30 September 1817, p 2587.

chief land-owners or **jenmis**. Munro, believing that the Company's rule held out "nothing to encourage any class beyond the lower ones" which, he was convinced, would in any case, "always follow the impulse given by their superiors", was in favour of encouraging the latter by the resurrection of the old village system in modified form.[183] This recommendation was embodied in the final report in 1822 of R. S. Graeme whose system of **amsom** ('parish') headmen or **adhigaris**, selected largely from the ancient class of incumbents, the large land-owners, lasted throughout the outbreak period of 1836-1919 and beyond. The implementation of Graeme's proposals in the years immediately after 1822 placed the headship of 'villages' for the first time in British Malabar in the hands of government appointees entrusted with extensive powers of revenue collection, policing and magistracy. It was the exercise of these powers which during the period 1836-1919 attracted both the occasional concern of British Collectors[184] and the less casual hostility of outbreak participants.[185] Indeed, within a few years of the introduction of the new village system, a protest against its operation was heard from the heart of the "fanatic zone". In 1828 a petition from inhabitants of Pandalur, claiming to speak for the feelings of "the people of all parts of the Country" complained of the gross misuse by the new village headmen of their new powers. In language which was to be echoed by intending **shahid** in the outbreak period the petitioners observed of those placed in authority over them:

> "These people are called our protectors but they have become our spoilers... to these people however authority is given and if your Petitioners complain... they will not be able to stand against the influence of the Money and the power of their adversaries, and these people and the Police Executioners supported by false

183 **Ibid**, pp 2587 and 2599.

184 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 2 January 1844, MJP No 69, 27 January 1844, p 268.

185 See above p 21.

witnesses and false complaints, will punish your petitioners with stripes and fetters."[186]

The possibility of the new village system becoming an instrument of oppression of the rural population in the hands of the new headmen had, in 1817, been brought in the strongest terms to the notice of Munro by some of the "best informed Nairs" who had "long been Revenue Servants". At that time, however, Munro was confident that there was no cause for concern since the **jenmis** who would be called on to fill the post of headman were, he considered, "in general much reduced in their circumstances, many of them (being) very poor."[187] In fact the real significance of the introduction of Graeme's village system into Malabar in the 1820s is that it came as a useful aid in a period when the **jenmi** was in the process of rebuilding his fortunes which, since the earliest period of British rule, had been in a most parlous state.

Before 1792 Malabar had been subject to invasion and control by the muslim rulers of Mysore, and large numbers of the hindu **jenmis** had fled. Before doing so, they had had to make what bargains they could with their Moplah **kanamdars** who thereby acquired large **kanam** ('mortgage') claims on the land.[188] On their return in the wake of the British in 1792, the **jenmis**, whether they were at first fully conscious or not of the rights of absolute landlord they had on paper acquired, were in practice so heavily in debt to the **kanamdars** that they in any case lacked the means necessary to enforce those rights. Moreover it would appear that, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the likelihood of **jenmis** being able to redeem their 'mortgages' was reduced by the heavy demand of the land tax

186 "The Petition of the Mussalmans, Nayars, Tiyars, and other people inhabiting the village of Pandalur in the Villagery and district of Manjeri, Talook of Yernaud in Malayalam", to Governor of Madras, MBRP, 28 July 1828, pp 7067-69. There appears to be no extant record of how, if at all, this petition was finally dealt with by the authorities.

187 Munro to Chief Sec., MRP, 30 September 1817, pp 2591-92.

188 See below p 112.

which was deductible from the **jenmi**'s share of the produce. Certainly the earliest decades of the century form a period when the universal estimation of the prostration of the **jenmi** coincided with evidence of the heavy pressure of a burdensome land revenue assessment. Both Graeme and Munro were anxious that the demand levied by government on the annual agricultural out-turn in Malabar should not be such as to leave the **jenmi** without substance. As Munro put it:

> "In order... to preserve so useful a class of men as the landlords, it is necessary to leave them a rent, and to revise our assessment for this purpose and lower it where too high."[189]

To achieve this end Graeme's proposal for a general reduction in the land revenue demand in Malabar was sanctioned. Though this reduction was never effected, the real burden of the assessment was in practice mitigated by a rise in the price of grain in Malabar which began during the time of Graeme's Commission in Malabar (1818-22).

For a number of years up to the time of Graeme's commission the weight of the land revenue burden was intensified by low prices for agricultural produce, since the percentage the assessment bore to the **patom** ('rent') was inversely proportional to selling prices. As Special Commissioner Logan accepted in 1881-82, for a number of years after 1805-06 (when the assessment which, basically, persisted until the end of the century was imposed) the revenue burden in the context of contemporary prices was 'oppressive'.[190] Price statistics for Malabar for the first half of the nineteenth century are by no means plentiful. However the data which are available indicate that a dramatic rise in grain prices at the close of the second decade of the century inaugurated a period of much higher prices than those prevailing in the previous ten years. From 1819 to 1837 Malabar grain prices seem to have been at a general level some 50 per cent higher than

189 Minute of President (Munro), MRP 16 July 1822, p 1872.

190 Logan, 'Report on Malabar Land Tenures', **loc cit**, pp lxviii and lxxxix.

that of 1809-18.[191] Though there seems to be a complete absence of price sequences for the period 1838-44, contemporary **Jamabandi** (Revenue Settlement) reports indicate that the grain price level of the preceding years was maintained.[192] A period of declining prices in 1845-51 was succeeded by very rapid inflation which by the late 1850s had taken grain prices to levels from which they never again descended to those of the first half of the nineteenth century.[193]

It seems likely that the rise in the price of grain which set in during the period after 1818 was of great importance in the re-emergence of **jenmi** power in the Malabar countryside. Only when prices began to rise above the low levels prevailing in 1809-18 and the revenue burden was in consequence reduced in real terms,[194] could the **jenmi** begin to pay off his debts to the **kanamdar** who only then would begin to appreciate that British rule meant a resurgence of **jenmi** power. At least as early as 1833-34 the Moplah **kanamdar** was being faced with eviction suits brought against him in the local courts by the Hindu **jenmi**.[195]

The actual origin of the Moplah outbreak is a matter of conjecture, but the phenomenon certainly seems to have appeared at a time when the **kanamdars** found it useful, it undoubtedly continued with the support of such men, and[196] it would seem to have disappeared temporarily in 1898 when it no longer served the interests of this group.

191 See Graph p 67.

192 The **Jamabandi** reports for the period 1838-39 to 1844-45 give no specific price statistics but like all Malabar **Jamabandi** reports up to this period merely indicate the price movement compared with the previous year.

193 See graph p 68.

194 Certainly by 1832 it would seem that the land revenue in Malabar began to be collected with facility. F. Clementson, Principal Collector to Govt. of Madras, 31 March, 1838, MBRP 6 March 1843, Vol 1850, p 3699, MRO.

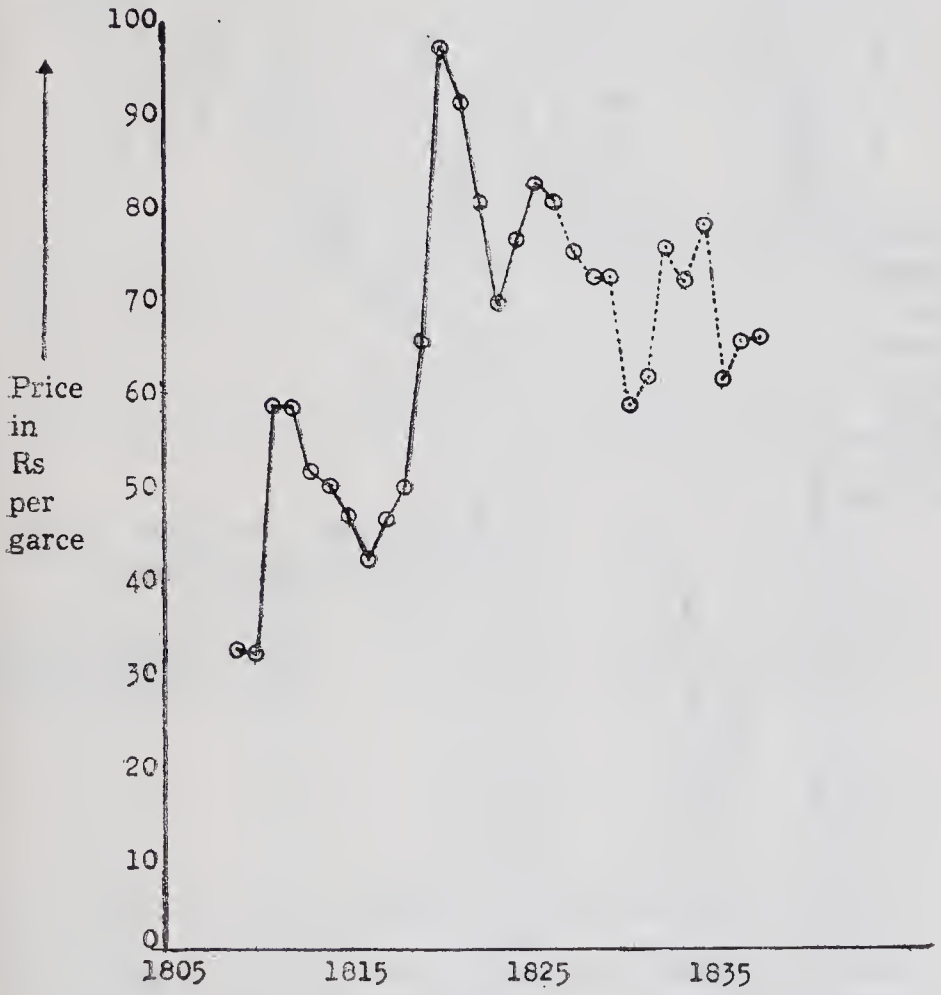
195 See, for example, decree of Court of Adawlut in Malabar Zillah, Original Suit No 137 of 1833, KDCA.

196 See below p 92.

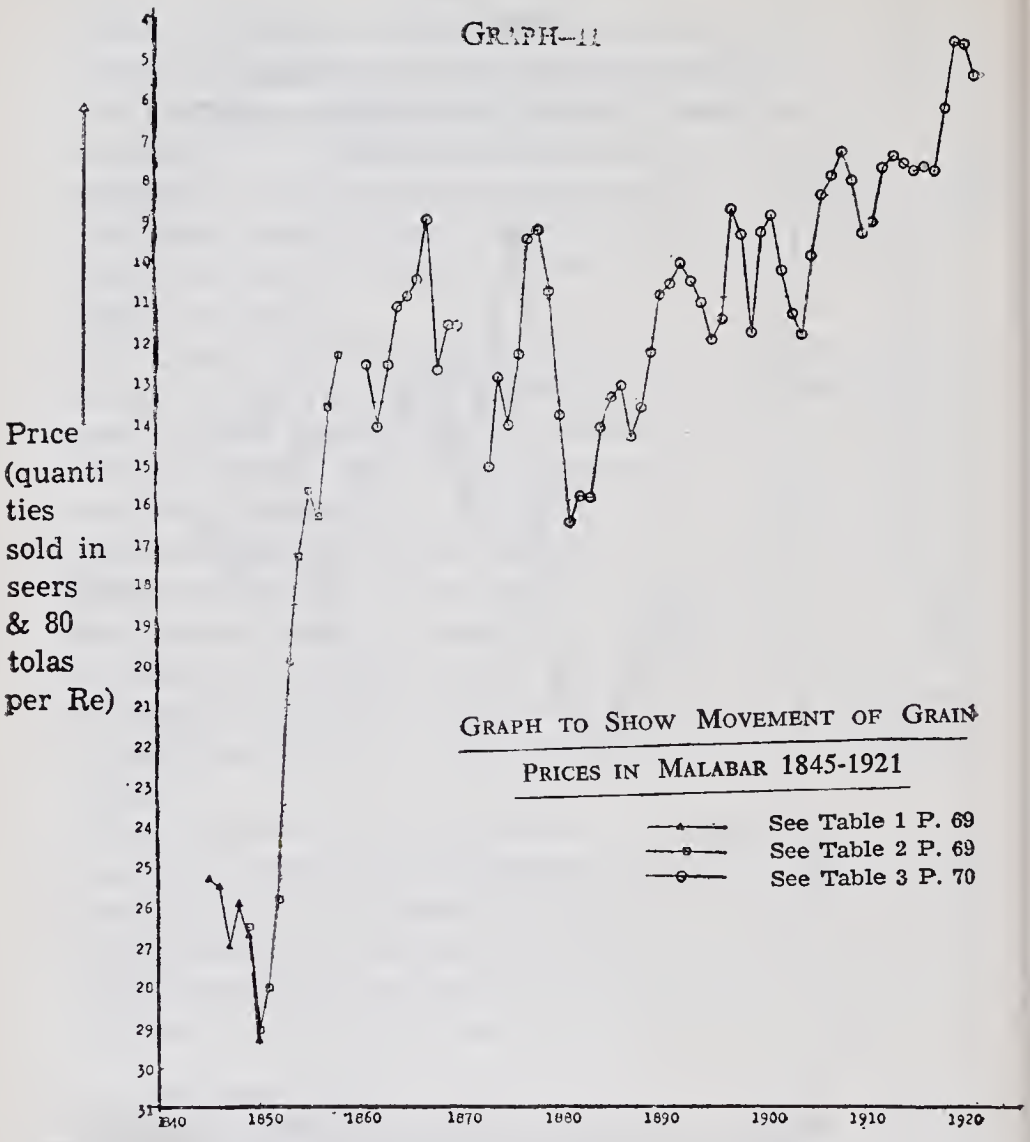
GRAPH—I

GRAPH TO SHOW PRICE MOVEMENT OF PADDY (2ND SORT) IN MALABAR 1809-37

(SEE TABLES ON PP. 69-70)



Even so, it cannot be said that the outbreak was "nothing but" a weapon of the substantial **kanamdar,** and that the men (of whatever social and economic status) who actually devoted themselves to death were mere tools. The outbreak was far too popular with the great mass of Ernad Moplahs, and especially the poorest, for this to be true. As district magistrate Conolly said of the doctrine that the murderer of an evicting **jenmi** would be en-



titled to Paradise, such notions were "far easier sown than rooted out amongst a wild people and that exhortation from superiors, other than spiritual, are of little avail against a popular faith."[197]

Nor is this surprising when the material gains to be derived from 'fanaticism' were so widespread. Hindu

197 Conolly to Sec., judicial, 29 November 1851, **Moplah Outrages Correspondence,** Vol I, p 227. That the Moplah's "spiritual superiors" also lacked the degree of control Conolly assumed is suggested in the discussion above, p 48.

Table 1

Price of 2nd sort paddy in Malabar, R-A-P per garce, April figures (plotted on graph 1)

1809	32-8-3	1818	49-7-10
1810	32-0-8	1819	65-7-10
1811	58-6-9	1820	97-2-2
1812	58-3-9	1821	91-3-4
1813	51-14-1	1822	80-10-4
1814	50-1-10	1823	69-1-1
1815	47-1-2	1824	76-8-6
1816	42-1-2	1825	82-9-6
1817	46-3-10	1826	80-7-4

Source: MBRP, Vol 241, MRO.

Table 2

Table to show the origin of 1826-37 section of graph 1

Year	Rs per moora[197a]	Annual change in price (Rs)	Percentage change	Price of 2nd sort paddy Rs per garce (April)[198]
1826-27	1.396	—0.089	—6.3	80.458
1827-28	1.307	—0.053	—4.06	75.388
1828-29	1.254	—0.001	0	72.328
1829-30	1.253	—0.235	—18.75	72.328
1830-31	1.018	+0.052	+5.11	58.768
1831-32	1.070	+0.243	+22.7	61.768
1832-33	1.313	—0.066	—5.02	75.808
1833-34	1.247	+0.105	+8.42	72.003
1834-35	1.352	—0.290	—21.42	78.073
1835-36	1.062	+0.072	+6.78	61.323
1836-37	1.134	+0.008	+0.705	65.483
1837-38	1.142			65.945

197a Average price of grain (rice and paddy) exported by sea and land from Malabar, statement E in F. Clementson, Principal Collector, Malabar to Board of Revenue, 31 March 1838, MBRP. 6 March 1843, Vol 1850, p 3730, MRO.

198 Table 1 gives price for 1826-27 which provides basis for prices in subsequent years. Plotted on Graph I.

TABLE 3

AVERAGE MARKET PRICE OF 'GRAIN' IN FASLIS 1255 TO 1260 (1845-46 TO 1850-51)

Year	Price, Rs per garce	Quantities sold, seers per Re*
1845-46	178	25.3
1846-47	177	25.5
1847-48	167	27.0
1848-49	174	25.9
1849-50	169	26.7
1850-51	154	29.3

* plotted on Graph II.

Source: Conolly to Board of Revenue, 22 November 1851, MBRP, 15 January 1852, p 997. Conversion of Rs/garce (x) to seers/Re(y): $\frac{4510}{x} = y$

TABLE 4

PRICE OF GRAIN IN MALABAR FASLIS 1259 TO 1268 (1849-50 TO 1858-59)

Year	Price 2nd sort paddy (Rs/garce)	Price 2nd sort rice	Quantities sold, 2nd sort rice (seers/Re)*
1849-50	79	170	26.5
1850-51	71	155	29.1
1851-52	73	161	28.0
1852-53	75	175	25.8
1853-54	99	226	19.9
1854-55	114	261	17.3
1855-56	131	288	15.7
1856-57	120	277	16.3
1857-58	140	332	13.6
1858-59	164	367	12.3

* plotted on Graph II.

Source: Statement A. J. D. Sim, Sec., Board of Revenue to President of Military Finance Commission, 26 December 1859 MBRP, 26 December 1859, pp 550-51.

mansions, often left abandoned in the panic engendered by an outbreak, were sometimes plundered by large num-

TABLE 5

PRICE OF RICE (COMMON) IN MALABAR, 1861-1921 (PLOTTED ON GRAPH II)

Year	Quantities sold, seers of 80 tolas per Re	Year	Quantities sold, seers of 80 tolas per Re
1861	12.54	1892	10.16
1862	14.14	1893	10.58
1863	12.54	1894	11.13
1864	11.14	1895	12.01
1865	10.93	1896	11.52
1866	10.50	1897	8.79
1867	9.00	1898	9.49
1868	12.75	1899	11.82
1869	11.57	1900	9.38
1870	11.57	1901	8.99
1871	—	1902	10.32
1872	—	1903	11.44
1873	15.10	1904	11.94
1874	12.88	1905	10.00
1875	14.09	1906	8.50
1876	12.34	1907	8.02
1877	9.49	1908	7.41
1878	9.29	1909	8.18
1879	10.78	1910	9.45
1880	13.88	1911	9.22
1881	16.56	1912	7.85
1882	15.83	1913	7.52
1883	15.87	1914	7.75
1884	14.17	1915	7.90
1885	13.45	1916	7.85
1886	13.16	1917	7.94
1887	14.43	1918	6.37
1888	13.70	1919	4.75
1889	12.35	1920	4.80
1890	10.86	1921	5.64
1891	10.66		

Source: Govt. of India, Prices and Wages in India, 11th, 19th and 37th issues.

bers of Moplah neighbours. The deliberate wholesale destruction of jenmis' deeds and moneylenders' accounts not infrequently occurred during outbreaks. Moreover, the tendency of an outbreak was "to benefit the Moplahs as a class" since, as one British official pointed out, it "keeps

their name up; deters many landlords from enforcing their legal rights, and supplies temporary employment on easy terms to many hundreds of Moplah 'guards' ".[199] (When 'fanatics' were on the rampage, many Moplahs quartered themselves as 'guards' on the terrified inmates of **jenmi** mansions demanding and receiving such "high feeding" and "presents" that their hosts were heartily glad to see their backs.) When terrorism is effected in the name of a community, all its members stand to gain (or, of course, lose) from the consequences. As W. Logan remarked in 1885:

> "the exaltation of the Mappilla religion carries with it the exaltation of the Mappilla class, and the exaltation of the Mappilla class secures very material advantages for that class in dealing with their landlords. A Hindu landlord has NO FEAR when setting the courts to work to oust, or raise the rent of a Hindu tenant; but he thinks twice—nay, three times and more —before using the advantages of his position in dealing with his Mappilla tenants. The Hindu cultivators are rapidly retrograding, the Mappillas are rapidly advancing under such circumstances. If the Mappillas gave up committing outrages, they would speedily be in respect of power over their Hindu landlords on the same footing as Hindus. Hence as a class they one and all rejoice when an outrage occurs."[200]

The feeling (that the constant threat of Ernad Moplahs breaking out engendered in the hindu) that an outbreak might be sparked off by any cause however slight, may be presumed to have given pause to any non-muslim in a position to exercise power over the Moplah. It was the impression of H. V. Conolly in 1849 that this "fear of the Hindoo in these Moplah Talooks acts as a great check against much abuse and that as a general rule he does not press for his rights with the same energy here as he

199 Report of Winterbotham, 5 May 1896, loc cit, p 66.

200 Logan to Chief Sec., 10 June 1885, MJP No 1727, 1 July 1885, p 2. The "rapid advance" Logan claimed for the Moplah tenant would appear to have been something of an exaggeration.

would in a more quiet part of the Country."[201] As the great **jenmis** of the south Malabar interior at this time frequently told one British official "we have abandoned rights and property, and are obliged to act in defence of our lives".[202] There seems little doubt that the Moplah tenant was liable to be treated more leniently than a hindu cultivator by **jenmis** in the zone of fanatical Moplah outbursts.

Nor can it be argued that, because the actual cultivating tenant (usually a **verumpattomdar,** a simple tenant having no mortgage claim on the land) often held the jenmi's land via a sub-leasing **kanam** tenant, it was only the **kanamdar** intermediary who stood to gain from the terrorisation of the **jenmi**. In very many instances the actual cultivator in the 'fanatic zone' held direct from the **jenmi** without intermediaries. Moreover, when a **jenmi** evicted his tenant, the sub-lessees under the latter were also liable to be turned out.[203] This ensured that, even where the classic pattern of Malayali agrarian sub-leasing, **jenmi-kanamdar-verumpattomdar,** obtained, the last link in the chain was by no means immune from the exercise of power by the first. Further, even the Moplah field labourer would not fail regularly to be brought into direct contact with the powerful **jenmi,** though the latter normally did not cultivate except through tenants. Apart from the very high incidence of coolie work and the leasing-in of land in the same family, very many labourers tended to find themselves regular supplicants at the doors of the big **jenmi** for loans of grain to keep hunger at bay. The Moplah coolie who perpetrated the August 1885 outbreak not only worked as a labourer for its victim but also periodically tried to borrow paddy from him.[204] Moreover,

201 Remarks of Conolly, appendix 2, Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 12 October 1849, MJP No. 794, 1 December 1849, p 4787.

202 Robinson to Conolly, 18 October 1849, MJP No 794, 1 December 1849, p 4947.

203 Petition 222, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Special Commission,** 1881-82, Vol III, p 39.

204 Logan to Acting Chief Sec., 22 November 1885, MJP No 3499, 30 December 1885, p 77.

the labourer and the **jenmi** land-monopolist impinged through the need of the former to acquire a house-site, with the compound which was customarily attached in Malabar. Significantly, the **shahid** spokesman who in August 1851 held forth so bitterly on the high-caste monopoly of land[205] was no substantial **kanamdar** intermediary but a coolie who, besides being a recipient of food loans from a local **jenmi** moneylender, had been in conflict over the use of his garden plot with the agent of the **jenmi** to which it belonged. [206]

It might also be said that the directing towards the substantial Moplah in particular of the policy under the Moplah acts of fining **amsoms** concerned in outbreaks[207] was calculated to make the richer **kanamdar**, in the period after 1854, less enthusiastic about outbreaks than his poorer neighbours. In the latter part of the outbreak period the more prosperous Moplahs, who sometimes were the means of thwarting outbreak plots by passing information in secret to the authorities,[208] must often have included the more substantial **kanamdar.** Even so the big **kanamdar**, especially if desperate and reduced to hopeless debt, might still (and in fact certainly did[209]) often calculate that the risk of suffering the penalties of the Moplah acts was outweighed by the gains to be registered by the terrorisation of the **jenmi.**

Moreover, although government, through the Moplah acts attempted to persuade the Ernad Moplah he must lose as a consequence of outbreaks, there is abundant evidence that his inflammability won him concessions from the administration. Under the regime of district magistrate Conolly in Malabar in the 1850s the local court in Ernad was under specific instructions that, in the event of the issue of an order for the eviction of a tenant who

205 See above pp 31-32.

206 Both the money lender and the agent fell victim to this outbreak.

207 See above p 24.

208 See below p 92.

209 See above pp 60-61.

was a Moplah, the matter should be brought to the notice of the authorities for an attempt to compromise the situation before final orders were passed.[210] The Court of Wards Manager of the Guruvayur Devaswom estate in 1915-16 withdrew one set of eviction suits on the grounds that a situation "bound to result in wholesale eviction of Ernad Mappillas, could not be allowed to culminate."[211] The fact that, apart from the special case of the planter **taluk** of Wynad, Ernad was the only major Malabar **taluk** for which the District Board budget showed an excess of expenditure over receipts was clearly because, as the collector insisted in 1902, there should be no stinting of funds in the "fanatic zone".

Further, although the administration was careful to refrain from "issuing formal orders on the subject" since it was "not advisable for the public to know that any steps are taken in the special favour of these ['fanatic zone'] Moplahs," in the late nineteenth century "religious issues" involving Moplahs in the outbreak area were taken out of the hands of the very largely high-

MALABAR DISTRICT BOARD BUDGET 1901-2[212]

Taluks	Receipts (Rs)	Expenditure (Rs)	Net Balance (Rs)
Chirakkal	48,915	43,100	+ 5,815
Kottayam	37,718	26,832	+ 10,886
Kurumbranad	45,535	32,503	+ 13,032
Calicut	40,820	36,446	+ 4,372
Ernad	53,994	63,846	— 9,852
Walluvanad	56,568	46,232	+ 10,336
Ponnani	72,293	55,318	+ 16,975
Palghat	92,858	74,397	+ 18,461
Wynad	24,864	71,957	— 47,093
Cochin	259	287	— 28

210 Memorandum of Conolly, 30 March 1852, MBRP 20 March 1854, p 4071.

211 Administration Report of J. A. Thorne for **fasli** 1325 (1915-16) 18 October 1916, MCWP No 55, 9 December 1916, p 10.

212 Conf. report of A. F. Pinhey, 20 May 1902, MBRP (RS, LR & A) No 121, 3 July 1902, pp 5-6.

caste hindu officials who would normally be responsible for trying them. Instead they were entrusted to the (European) Special Assistant Magistrate in charge of Ernad and Walluvanad.[213] The policy, which was a feature of the magistracy in Malabar of H. V. Conolly from 1840 to 1855, of increasing the number of Moplah local government servants in south interior Malabar[214] owed its vigour to the expectation that outbreaks would thereby be made less likely.

With so many and often widespread benefits to be gained it did not need leaders and instigators from the ranks of the substantial **kanamdars** before a "fanatical" disturbance could occur. Of the June 1884 Kizhumuri disturbance, here excluded as an outbreak only because the participants failed to go through with their intention to "die fighting", district magistrate Logan noted:

> "the outrage does not seem to have been planned for the benefit of any particular Mappilla. It was seemingly planned by poor people [and] carried out by poor people."[215]

In the outbreak of August 1852 three young "day labourers" tried to deal with the Nair **jenmi** who had moved the father of one of the 'fanatics', a **verumpattomdar**, from a plot he had held for many years.[216] No kind of role appears to have been played by any **kanamdar.** The Moplah outbreak was a **popular** phenomenon, whatever use the substantial **kanamdars** made of it and despite the haphazard influence they might occasionally exercise over it when the opportunity arose to thwart plots they deemed not to their advantage by acting the informer. If the ebb and flow of the Moplah outbreak can be correlated with the changing requirements of the

213 F. C. Parsons, Acting Malabar Collector to Chief Sec., 13 June 1898, MJP No 996 (Conf.), 28 June 1898, MRO.

214 See above p 19.

215 Logan to Chief Sec., 13 February 1885, MJP No 628, 10 March 1885, p 21.

216 **Urzee** (memorial) of E. Shangara Menon, Head Police Officer, Kurumbranad, MJP No 379, 2 July 1863, **pp** 3351-52.

kanamdar intermediary, this is hardly less so in the case of the needs of social groups among the rural Moplahs far more numerous and disadvantaged. The effect of the failure of British government to intervene decisively to curb **jenmi** power was to subordinate the differences in circumstance among the Ernad Moplahs to the one overriding consideration of challenging landlord ascendancy.

Interpretation. Part 3: Problems

The above thesis may be applied to three problems Moplah outbreaks pose: (a) where they occurred, (b) whom they involved, and (c) when they happened.

(a) The fact that, with few exceptions, outbreaks occurred in interior south Malabar rather than in north Malabar or the coastal zone (the two other areas where a rural Moplah population existed under British rule) was probably because the type of agriculture in the latter regions made the tenant less vulnerable to the adverse exercise of **jenmi** power than in the former.[217] Interior

217 Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. ('Peasant Mobilization in Malabar: The Mappilla Rebellion, 1921', in Robert I. Crane, ed., **Aspects of Political Mobilization in South Asia**, p 97) has put forward another possible reason for the difference in militancy between the south and the north Malabar Moplahs. The former practised a system of inheritance which, because property was divided between all heirs, perpetuated poverty according to Professor Hardgrave. He has stated that, in contrast, the north Malabar Moplahs followed a Malayali law of inheritance known as **marumakkattayam** ("descent through sister's children") under which, because partition was much more restricted, it was possible to enjoy relative prosperity. This argument cannot be accepted unless it can be shown why a state of poverty which is supposed to have been the result of the Ernad Moplahs' own system of inheritance should have led them to perpetrate acts of violence against hindus. Moreover, the population responsible for outbreaks made up only part of the Moplah population practising the division of property among heirs. This system prevailed among the peaceable Muslim inhabitants of coastal south Malabar. It was also reported in 1915 to be practised by the Moplahs of nearly all parts of the north Malabar **taluk** of Kurumbranad (Kurumbranad Tahsildar to Sub-Collector, Tellicherry, 13 February 1915, MJP No 1191, 31 May 1915, pp 5-6).

south Malabar was primarily a paddy-growing area. In the north, and in the coastal strip, garden cultivation of crops such as the coconut dominated. The Special Settlement Officer for Malabar gave figures in 1904 showing that the ratio of wet cultivation (paddy) to garden land in the four northern **taluks** of Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad and Calicut was 59:100 whilst for Ernad and Walluvanad it was 203:100.[218]

These figures are significant in that the rents **jenmis** were able to impose on wet lands were normally more burdensome than on garden cultivation. As special commissioner Logan pointed out, it was "notoriously the grain crop cultivators who [were] worst off". The fact that the yield of gardens was extremely sensitive to the quality of husbandry had "taught many of the Janmis that they cannot rack-rent gardens as they can grain lands".[219] The attempt of the **jenmi** to maximise his gains at the expense of his garden tenant merely resulted in the latter taking as much as he could from the garden and thus ruining it. Thus, in 1916-17, the Court of Wards Manager of the Guruvayur Devaswom estate observed that tenants of garden lands were always the most difficult to deal with in regard to affairs concerning rent payment.[220] An agriculturalist in north or coastal Malabar was consequently far less likely to have to resort to violence to curb **jenmi** power than the tenant in the outbreak zone. Indeed, social divisions appear to have been sharper in the latter where the **jenmi** was more likely to be a "big man" clearly distinguishable from the rest of the population. Logan in 1882 gave figures for 'principal' **jenmis** (those holding 100 or more pieces of land in any one **amsom**) which show that whilst Ernad and Walluvanad had 15.6 per cent of the total number of **jenmis** in Malabar they had 35.5 per

218 Report of N. MacMichael, 10 June 1904, MBRP (RS, LR & A) No 93, 10 April 1905, p 28.

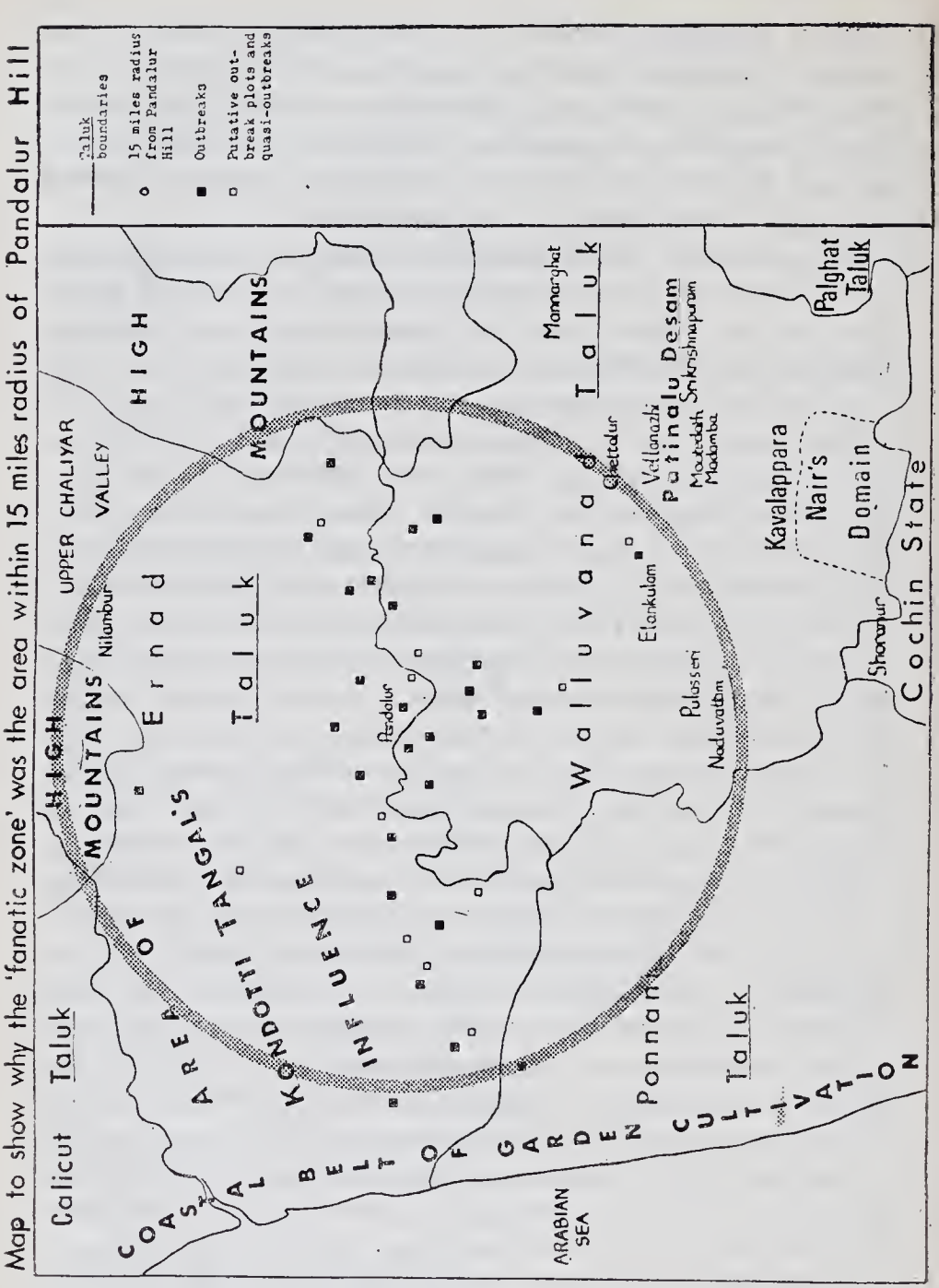
219 'Report on Malabar Land Tenures', **loc cit**, Vol I, pp xxi and xxv.

220 Administration Report for **fasli** 1326 (1916- 17), 8 November 1917, MCWP No 55, 14 December 1917, p 2.

cent of 'principal' **jenmis**.[221] It was always claimed that in north Malabar land was more widely distributed and that the same person was often both a tenant and a landlord. The outbreak zone was located in that part of the area of Malabar, the southern interior, in which the **jenmi** stood out most clearly as an oppressor.

Even so, why was it possible to narrow down the main area of Moplah outbreaks to that part of the south Malabar interior within, as H. M. Winterbotham had correctly observed in 1896,[222] some 15 miles of Pandalur Hill? The map (p 80) reveals that, on the north and east, this zone ceases to be one of paddy cultivation where it impinges on steep-sided areas of high relief. Similarly, to the west the outer fringe of the "fanatic zone" terminates, at a distance more or less 15 miles from the celebrated hill, at the narrow coastal strip of predominantly garden cultivation. Within 15 miles north-west of Pandalur is located Kondotti, in and around which many of the Moplahs were under the influence of a **Tangal** whose loyalty to the British had been secured by an annual cash payment. This also ensured that the ties of mutual dependence which normally linked the Ernad Moplah to the divine were replaced by a constraint operable only by the latter over the former.[223] Only to the south and in the upper part of the valley of the river Chaliyar around Nilambur in north-eastern Ernad do the limits of the "fanatic zone" present problems if the foregoing thesis is accepted. In these directions the absence of the Moplah outbreak might easily be explained in the most direct way in terms of the absence, or at least relative paucity, of Moplahs in all these areas. According to the census of 1891, for example, the percentage of muslims in the total population of the **amsom** of Nilambur was only 22 whilst similar figures are derivable for the **amsoms** near the southern fringe of the "fanatic zone" in Walluvanad **taluk**, for example

221 'Report on Malabar Land **Tenures'**, **loc cit**, Vol I, p lvii.
222 See above p 20.
223 See above pp 50-51.



Naduvattam 28 per cent, Pulasseri 27, Elamkulam 29, and Chettalur 20. The real problem is to explain the small numbers of Moplahs in such areas of the south Malabar interior.

Almost certainly the answer must be sought in the policy, dating back in many cases at least to the beginnings of British rule, of local high-caste hindu magnates narrowly restricting the residence of Moplahs within their domains. Thus in 1852, H. V. Conolly noted that hindu **jenmis** were at times "very averse to the introduction of Settlers of the Moplah persuasion in their vicinity". Conolly went on to observe that the Nilambur Tirumulpad, whose ancestors had been particularly prominent in the struggle in the 1790s of the hindu landed interest against the Ernad Moplah,[224] was "a particularly difficult person to deal with in this matter" being prepared to have "the whole of the vast forest tracts in the rear of Nelumboor abandoned to nature and fever than allow a single Moplah to settle there".[225] Exactly the same policy is known to have been pursued in a number of parts of Walluvanad **taluk** where **amsoms** with few Moplahs made the local generation of outbreaks virtually impossible. The best known example of the dedicated pursuit of such a policy was that of the Kavalappara Nair within whose limits in south Walluvanad no Moplah was even permitted to stay the night.[226] However, further north, closer to the immediate fringes of the fanatic zone in the area known as the "Pathinalu Desam" (14 **desams**) comprising the **amsoms** of Mootedath Madamba, Srikrishnapuram and Vellanazhi, the exclusion of muslims was almost as complete. In this area, as late as 1902, practically every inch of land was reported to be in the possession of temples of big Nambudiri **jenmis** whose aversion for the Moplah entailed an exclusion of that community so exacting that at the time they numbered only 28 in an area of 17,000 inhabitants.[227] For much of Malabar to the south of the

224 For details of this struggle see Chapter 2.

225 Conolly to Strange, 24 April 1852, MBRP 20 March 1854, pp 4054-55.

226 Logan, 'Report on Malabar Land Tenures', loc cit, Vol. I, p lxxiii.

227 A. R. Loftus-Tottenham, Acting Special Asst. Collector,

"fanatic zone", comprising Palghat **taluk** and southern Walluvanad, it seems likely that the low proportion of Moplahs in the population in the period 1836-1919 was connected with the policies of early British administrators, operating no doubt under the influence of the prejudices of local hindu chiefs. Thus, at the start of the nineteenth century, Thomas Warden, then collector of Palghat **taluk** and parts of south Walluvanad operated a policy of discouraging any spread of Moplahs into these areas on the grounds of the past record of the Malabar muslim in the contest for hindu land.[228] In short, Winterbotham's "fanatic zone" was located within a few miles of Pandalur Hill simply because it so happened that this was the one part of Malabar where large numbers of rural Moplahs not of the Kondotti sect worked mainly wet lands.

(b) As already indicated, for the lower hindu social orders there was no congregational form of religious organisation to compensate for the many obstacles to combination existing in rural Malabar. During the short-lived regime in Malabar of Collector William Macleod (1801-03) it would seem that there was an intention to make some attempt to encourage "such religious ceremonies as will frequently bring the Hindus together" with the purpose of countering the isolating effects of the scattered mode of settlement of the inhabitants.[229] Even so, whatever Macleod was able to achieve in this direction in his 17 months in Malabar, there can be no doubt that the Mala-

Malappuram Division to Malabar Collector, 8 November 1902, MRP No 1177 (Conf.), 24 December 1902, p 8.

228 Warden to Board of Revenue, 19 March 1801, MBRP 30 March 1801, pp 3500-01. For details of this contest see Chapter 2. Another advocate of the policy of erecting barriers to the spread of Moplahs into areas they had not yet penetrated was Alexander Walker, Commissioner in Malabar in 1800-01, see below p 111.

229 Macleod to Board of Revenue, 19 October 1801, MBRP 28 January 1802, pp 1124-25. Though this scheme was directed against the Moplah trade monopolist (see above p 42) for the benefit of the hindu 'cultivator,' Macleod claimed to have commercial (free trade) rather than political objectives in view.

yali hindu continued to find in religion little scope for combination against the **jenmi**. On the contrary, the capacity of hindu tenants and labourers to organise on an occupational or any other basis was actually limited by the observance of the demands of caste hierarchy and exclusiveness. Even among the field slave population the distinctions of caste were observed minutely. The different castes into which the slave population of Malabar was sub-divided observed different forms of worship and had their own separate customs. Inter-marriage and inter-dining were prohibited as was even the close approach of members of different slave castes. In the 1830s, for example, it was reported that in one part of north Malabar a 'Poolyan' (Pulayan or Cherumar) might not approach within ten paces of a Vettuvan, a 'Parian' (Parayan) was obliged to remain the same distance from a 'Poolyan' and a 'Nyadee' (Nayadi) twelve paces from a 'Poolyan'.[230] Some years later, H. V. Conolly reported that the abhorrence of the Ernad Cherumar to the vicinity of the Nayadi was so great (being "equal... to what is felt by the highest Cast Brahmin") that nothing could induce the former to work near to the latter.[231] In north Malabar, where the rules of distance pollution seem to have been less rigidly observed, Vettuvan and Pulayan agricultural labourers could be induced, on one European-owned estate, to work together. However, after work the former invariably bathed before returning home when they uttered "the usual cry [to] warn the coming Poolyan to quit the road and retreat the prescribed distance". The separation in almost all spheres of life of members of these two castes, equivalent in class status but differentiated in the ritual hierarchy, was described by the owner of the estate as follows:

"['The Vettuvans'] houses are obliged to be 40 paces

230. F. C. Brown, a north Malabar planter, Govt. of India, **Law Commission on Slavery in India, Report**, p 209.

231 Conolly to Acting Sec., Board of Revenue, 6 April 1843, MJP No 277, 20 April 1844, p 1359.

> distant from the 'Poolians'; they desert their houses when less. They will not frequent the same roads, nor buy at the same bazaar, there being a separate one kept by Mahomedans for the Poolians. Nor will the children intermix in each others games on a common play ground."[232]

Naturally, when such prohibitions divided members of one 'polluting' caste from another, the gulf between these and a hindu labourer of a "non-polluting" caste like the Tiens was virtually unbridgeable. In 1834 it was noted, in north Malabar, that although free and unfree labourers "mingle[d] daily at work" the latter might not approach, far less walk through, a village inhabited by the former.[233]

Far from presenting them with opportunities to resist **jenmi** power, the religion of these groups bound them the more securely to their high-caste landlords. For the hindu, there could be no possibility of sanction for and leadership of resistance to the rural magnates from **his** religious superiors, who indeed, were often one and the same person. The fact that the low rural hindu, far from exercising any economic control over **his** source of religious dispensation, was subject himself to a very material dependence on that same source ensured that, should he incur the displeasure of his Nambudiri Brahmin **jenmi**, he was liable to an excommunication which was religious, social and economic. The **Desa virodham** (enmity of all the residents of the **desam** or 'village') and **Svajana virodham** (enmity of one's own caste people) which might be brought into play denied the excommunicant access to necessary religious facilities, wells and all kinds of village services. The "smallest show of independence" was "resented as a personal affront", and though the **jenmi** was liable to prosecution in such cases "it was found impossible to get the people to come forward to complain **for fear of the utter**

232 F. C. Brown, **loc cit.**

233 'Answers of F. C. Brown, January 1834, to questions drawn up by Board of Control on East India slavery', MJP, 12 August 1834, pp 3897-98.

consequences—eviction and ruin of families."[234] Indeed, the power of the big Malayali landlord over his hindu dependents could be such that, even towards the end of the outbreak period of 1836-1919, one Malabar Magistrate admitted:

> "It is hardly too much to say that in parts of the district the King's Writ does not run except with the kind permission of the local magnate, and private courts of justice are not uncommon."[235]

In 1822 it had been noted by H. S. Graeme, then commissioner in Malabar, that the low-caste hindu generally refrained from "appealing to a superior tribunal against the authority" of his **jenmi.**[236] Graeme attributed this reluctance not only to fear but also to the survival of a state of vassalage linking to the **jenmi** patrons (or **tamburans**) nearly all members of the hindu castes below the rank of Nair, also a certain proportion of Nairs themselves but, significantly, not the Moplahs. In the period before the start of British rule in Malabar, Graeme was informed, the **tamburan** was bound to protect his **adian** (vassal) and procure redress for any wrong he might sustain. The **adian** was expected to be ready with his personal service at the **tamburan**'s requisition, including on the occasion of the latter's personal quarrels. Indeed, during British rule, at least as late as the end of the outbreak period, should a **jenmi** have any important project in hand, his **adian** was expected to assist "with his money if need be, with his testimony true or false, and on occasions with his strong right arm".[237] Even so, there seems little doubt that this vassal relationship weakened under British rule which offered alternative means of protection

234 Logan, 'Report on Malabar Land Tenures', **loc cit,** Vol I, p xxvi.

235 Remarks of Innes on South Malabar Police Administration Report for 1913, MJP No 1771, 19 August 1914, p 20.

236 Report, MRP 16 July 1822, para 17.

237 Innes to Sec., Commissioners of Land Revenue and Forests, 26 August 1911, MRP No 9 (Conf.), 2 January 1914, p 25.

to the adian and under which the **jenmi** was tempted to flout those customary obligations which might obstruct his exploiting new opportunities for maximising his return from the land. It seems likely, therefore, that the deference the lower hindu castes had formerly rendered to their **tamburans** partly through a sense of advantage to be gained was, as British rule progressed, increasingly exacted through fear of **jenmi** power.

Of course it was open to any hindu wishing to mitigate the formidable array of sanctions he was subject to at the hands of the **jenmi** to do so by becoming a muslim. In fact it was commonly observed by British administrators that considerable numbers of low-caste hindus were exploiting this opportunity. Census returns indicate that the proportion of muslims in the population of Ernad **taluk** rose from 48.97 per cent in 1871 to 59.19 per cent in 1921.

PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIMS IN THE TOTAL POPULATION OF ERNAD TALUK 1871-1921

1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
48.97	50.64	52.67	54.46	56.90	59.19

The material advantages from conversion for the Cherumar in particular were clear. In 1843 it was pointed out that, by the custom of the country, the pay of a Cheruman was less than that allowed to free labourers like Moplahs.[238] Some two decades earlier it had been noted that the slave-owners themselves admitted that in south interior Malabar the differential was in the order of 10:13.[239] As late as 1893 it was reported by the Malabar collector that Cherumars in Ernad **taluk** were still receiving wages at a rate lower than that which other classes

238 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 24 November 1843, MJP No 277, 20 April 1844, p 1339.

239 Report of Graeme, MRP 16 July 1822, paras 55, 56 and 58.

of agricultural labourer were entitled to.[240] Conversion to Islam also opened up the possibility of the Cheruman

OCCUPATIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF TWO 'CASTES' IN MALABAR, 1921

OCCUPATION	MAPPILLA %	CHERUMAN %
Agricultural labourers	23.9	91.2
Basket makers and other workers in woody mats	—	3.2
Cultivators: owners and tenants	33.4	0.5
Fishing and selling fish	6.0	—
Other trade in foodstuffs	6.2	—
Sundry bazaar-keepers	4.9	—
Workers in coconut fibre and makers of rope etc. and dealers in textiles	3.6	—
Porters and messengers and miscellaneous labourers	3.4	—
Cart owners, drivers etc.	1.8	—
Landowners and tenants	1.8	—
Coffee, tea etc. plantation employees	1.2	—
Hotel keepers and servants	1.2	—
Tailors	1.0	—
Religion	1.3	—
Others	10.3	5.1
Total	100.0	100.0

securing a means of livelihood less restricting than that of agricultural labourer, to which he was very largely confined by the pressure of caste sentiment. Even as late as 1921, Census returns revealed that as many as 94.4 per cent of Malabar Cherumars were still engaged in the traditional occupations of the caste: agricultural labour and basket making. Whilst throughout the period 1836-1919 it was true to say, with the minimum exaggeration, that the "Malabar slave (could) not better himself by his labour";[241]

240 H. Bradley, Settlement Report of Malabar, 11 December 1893, MBRP (RS, LD & A) No 126, 8 March 1894, p 225.

241 E. B. Thomas, Acting Judge, Calicut, to Register, Court of Sudr and Foujdaree Udalut, 24 November 1841, MJP No 117, 16 March 1842, p 115.

the Moplah was by no means so narrowly restricted. Of course, a low-caste convert also experienced a rise in the ritual hierarchy and was therefore not subject (at least to the same extent) to the humiliations to which the low-caste hindu was liable as a result of the belief that he polluted brahmins and Nairs at a distance of several feet. This is not to say that high-caste hindus always readily accepted the relaxation of caste restrictions the conversion of, say, a Cheruman to Islam was supposed to entail, and collisions between low-caste converts and Nairs were sometimes the result. For a brief period in 1852 the issue in fact seems to have reached something of a climax with Syed Fazl, the Mambram Tangal, using his influence to uphold the Moplah's insistence that all his caste-fellows should receive less contemptuous treatment than the Nair was accustomed to mete out to low castes. The campaign seems to have centred on the demand that the high-caste hindu should not fail to make use of the respectful form of the second person when addressing Moplahs.[242]

What is of special significance in this struggle was the readiness shown by the Ernad Moplah community as a whole to rally to the support of low-caste converts suffering misuse at the hands of domineering Nairs. As Logan stated in 1887, in the event of a Cheruman convert being "bullied or beaten the influence of the whole Muhammadan community comes to his aid" and that "with fanaticism still rampant the most powerful of landlords dares not to disregard the possible consequences of making a martyr of his slave".[243] By bcoming a Moplah, a Cheruman labourer or Tien **verumpattomdar** was recruited to a body which functioned as a self-defence organisation of the rural subordinate whose ultimate weapon in this period was the outbreak. The association which had "all along headed the opposition to the jenmi" was the Moplah community of

242 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 11 February 1852, MJP No 125, 20 February 1852, p 694.

243 Logan, **Malabar Manual**, Vol I, p 148.

south interior Malabar.[244] Conversions certainly curbed the field of power of the Nambudiri and Nair landlords. This, and the undoubted benefits the convert derived from membership of his new community, must have been important elements in the striking zeal for proselytism for which the Moplah was renowned. Moreover, the earthly benefits of proselytism to the Moplah community of Ernad were sometimes made clear in more direct ways. When, in 1920, Moplah tenants of the Guruvayur Devaswam estate combined to attempt to prevent the making of any offer to re-lease the holding of a co-religionist which had been decreed for surrender, the Court of Wards Manager, to break the confederation, had to influence a hindu tenant to accept the lease.[245] The surviving ties of thraldom binding low-caste hindu tenants and labourers to the **jenmi** helped ensure that the former, especially when Cherumar but not excluding higher castes, could on occasions be "apt and unresisting tools" in the hands of their masters.[246]

In most methods of Moplah resistance to the local power structure, conversion tended to play a conspicuous part. In several outbreaks the pattern of action for participants was to murder those they regarded as oppressors of the rural Moplah and 'convert', forcibly or otherwise, any other hindu who fell into their hands, these proselytes occasionally becoming members of the gang. One Moplah gang in 1843 "went out" specifically to deal with a Nair, who was both a **jenmi** and an **adhigari** and who had angrily forced one of his female "outdoor menials" to apostatise, after her conversion had given her the temerity to dispense with the deference she had previously been obliged to render him.[247] Conversion seems to have been an important weapon in the struggle against the **jenmi**.

244 'Report on Malabar Land Tenures', **loc cit**, Vol I, p lxx.

245 Administration Report for **fasli** 1330 (1920-21), 11 October 1921, MCWP No 44, 16 November 1921, p 2.

246 E. B. Thomas to Register, Court of Sudr and Foujdaree Udalut, 5 April 1841, MJP No 418, 3 June 1841, p 2398.

247 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 4 November 1843, MJP No 69 27 January 1844, p 198.

No doubt for this reason a number of outbreaks (such as those in December 1884, May 1885 and February-March 1915) were directed against lowly hindus, for these were apostates who had reneged on their previous commitment to Islam. This act, seen as a threat to the community, was always well-calculated to inflame Moplah feeling. It would seem that the outbreak directed against the low-caste apostate was a particularly brutal and no doubt therefore a somewhat effective means of ensuring solidarity, of helping strengthen the 'horizontal' links between Moplah and Moplah at the expense of the 'vertical' bonds between the **jenmi** and his hindu dependents. This is not to argue that Islam in Ernad was "nothing but" a kind of proto-trade union or peasant league. However, it does seem to have been the medium through which functions which in other circumstances are discharged by such bodies were performed. But precisely because south Malabar Islam was not, like a peasant league, specifically designed to discharge these functions, the instrument proved to be clumsy and not wholly efficacious. The zeal of the typical outbreak participant for notoriety as a "martyr to the faith"[248] was an indirect and uncertain form of guarantee that the outbreak would be directed along channels meeting with the approval of the Ernad Moplah community in general. The frenzied Moplah 'fanatic' was not always carefully discriminating in his choice of victim and the lives of a number of hindus were attempted in outbreaks almost certainly merely because they **were** hindus. In the 1896 outbreak some of the **shahid** encamped in the great Manjeri temple, on spotting one Kunhi Krishnan Nayar, fired at him, calling out "There goes a Kudimi (topknot) man. Shoot him".[249] In other cases the religious form of the instrument may have permitted some Moplahs to attempt the murder of hindus for personal reasons having nothing to

248 See above p 58.

249 Statement of Valiya Mannil Chek, 29 March 1896, L/PJ/6/422, 996/99, p 20. Malayali Hindus, except for some low castes like the Cherumar and unlike the totally-shaven Moplahs, when shaving their hair left a tuft worn as a top-knot.

do with **jenmi** oppression, claiming social and religious sanction for their crime by subsequently "going out" as '**shahid**'.[250] None of this however should obscure the undoubted fact that the outbreak was overwhelmingly[251] directed against the power network the Ernad Moplah felt was oppressing him. Moreover, incidents such as that in 1919 when, immediately after a murderous assault on an oppressive Nambudiri **jenmi**'s wedding feast, a Moplah gang released unharmed one Nambudiri on the grounds that he was said to be merely a poor guest going for meals,[252] indicate that the "Moplah religious fanatic" was capable of a fine discrimination. Certainly the myth that the Moplah who "went out" tried to kill each and every hindu he met does not bear scrutiny. The occasions when **shahid** permitted hindus to proceed unharmed were very numerous.

However, it is most important to note that the outbreak was a weapon which could be of use only against **infidel** oppressors. Whatever sanctions a Moplah could use against muslim tyrants, they could hardly include those derived from articles of faith which taught the sinfulness of the murder of a fellow believer. On the contrary, there were several cases in which the enmity of a Moplah for one of his own religion who had oppressed him found outlet in outrage against hindus. Thus, in the August 1849 outbreak, which claimed several hindus as victims, one indigent young Moplah was led to "go out" after his uncle had enriched himself at the expense of the participant's mother when the family property was divided.[253] In March 1884, Ossan Kutti Mammu, an Ernad Moplah **verumpattomdar** (simple tenant), threatened with eviction (for failure to pay rent) by both his Brahmin and his Moplah **jenmis**, plot-

250 See, for example, report of Logan, 25 April 1877, MJP No 1134, 5 May 1877, pp 586-98.

251 See figures given above pp 15-16.

252 J. F. Hall, Malabar Magistrate to Sec., Judicial, 25 April 1919, MJP No 1310, 9 June 1919, p 5.

253 Robinson's report of 18 October 1849, **loc cit**, pp 4881-82.

ted an outbreak in which the former was to be the chief victim and the latter apparently untouched.[254] Again, in 1915 three Moplahs, with grievances about what they regarded as the swindling behaviour of a Moplah 'lessor', though they assaulted him and burnt his house, then made as if to commit a 'fanatical' outbreak in which they killed a Tien.[255]

Under these circumstances, the outbreak was of no use to the Moplah poor against that section of the muslim rural community which was most likely to oppress them. These were the substantial Moplah **kanamdar** intermediaries who often stood between the **jenmis** and the **verumpattomdars** as tenants of the former and landlords in relation to the latter and who could rack-rent just as well as the **jenmis.** The solidarity of community which was of such value to the Ernad Moplah in combating high-caste hindu power suppressed, at least in the context of the failure of British rule to act decisively to curb **jenmi** power, the contradictions in the alliance between the big Moplah **kanamdar** and the rest of his co-religionists subordinate to the **jenmi.**

(c) As has been indicated, the outbreak persisted because the mass of Ernad Moplahs wanted it to. However, British policy from 1854 of fining **amsoms** which were involved in outbreaks and deporting many bread-winners as suspects diminished the return the community derived from the outbreak. Indeed, after the passing of the Moplah acts, it was not unknown for anxious muslim inhabitants of the "fanatic zone", more especially those with much property to lose, to seek to avoid the penalties of the special legislation by the disclosure of outbreak conspiracies to the authorities. And yet, since the British were unwilling to tackle the root cause of the problem, the powers of the local high-caste hierarchy, and since there was little other

254 C. A. Galton, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 6 June 1884 (Conf.), MJP Nos 1605-11, 2 July 1884, pp 7 and 9, MRO.

255 Report of F. B. Evans, Malabar Magistrate, 22 November 1915, MJP No 3008, 6 December 1915, p 6.

means of resistance, outbreaks persisted, though on a more sparing scale.

That Moplahs hoped government would be influenced to react favourably to their grievances seems indicated by the number of occasions on which Moplah 'writings', often left behind by outbreak participants themselves, complained of **jenmi** oppression and threatened worse outbreaks should government continue to be supine. As Manjeri Athan Gurikal put it in his last testament, referring to the machinations of certain "landlords and Rajahs", if these were "not put a stop to by the Sirkar, there will be... no other alternative, but to cut off the heads of these Hindoos".[256] The outbreak must be seen partly as a peremptory demand for government intervention. In view of this, it seems significant that, after the first, relatively modest gestures by government to curb **jenmi** power through the legislative measures of 1887-1900,[257] support for outbreaks dwindled until they were so dramatically ended for a 17-year period in 1898.

No doubt those most in favour of alternative forms of action to the outbreak would be those with most to lose from the fining it was liable to entail: the richer **kanamdar** intermediaries. This group would also have been that most able to afford the improvements the provision for compensation for which the 1887 and 1900 Acts intended to be a weapon of defence against the **jenmi**. The influence of the substantial **kanamdar** intermediary in the Ernad Moplah community would certainly be considerable, for though a tenant **vis-a-vis** the **jenmi** he was also landlord to numbers of undertenants, many of them muslims of course. However it would be as much an error to overestimate the manipulative role of the more wealthy **kanamdar** in this instance as at the height of the Moplah

256 'Writing of Syed Assan, Manjery Athan and all the others who've taken possession of Manjeri temple', appendix 2, Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 12 October 1849, MJP No 794, 1 December 1849, p 4788.

257 See above pp 26-28.

outbreaks. As in the nineteenth century so in the period 1898-1915 far wider sections of the Ernad Moplah community than the **kanamdar** were interested in the prevailing forms of the resolution of grievance which became established. It was by no means only the substantial **kanamdar** who benefited (at first) from the legislation of 1887-1900. Even the poorest tenant families, indeed even the average Malabar labourer with his hut and compound rented from the **jenmi**, would presumably have been able to find the few annas needed for the expense of planting some fruit trees with which to erect some kind of barrier to eviction. However, it is of some importance to note that the Tenant's Improvements Act applied to **all** those in a landlord relationship to others as well as **all** those in a tenant relationship. Thus, the man who ought to have been most unambiguously the beneficiary of the act was the actual cultivator who was landlord to no-one, and not the intermediary who, whilst he might gain much **vis-a-vis** the **jenmi**, also might lose in relation to his under-tenants. Of course in practice the greater resources of the **kanamdar** intermediary would ensure that he would be able to register gains much in excess of those of the actual cultivator. Even so, it was the advantage accruing to the Ernad Moplah community at large from the legislation of 1887-1900 which was the chief factor behind the temporary abandonment after 1898 of the traditional method of challenging **jenmi** power. In the evidence collected for the 1896 report there are signs that some Moplahs were beginning to argue for the alternative of relying on redress for grievances through approach to the collector.[258] Certainly, during the 1889-1915 period, outbreak zone Moplahs showed themselves inclined to exploit the more constitutional methods of pressing their claims. In 1901, during his tour of Malabar, the governor was presented with a petition from the **Hidayut-ul-Muslimin Sabha** about the difficulties experienced by Moplahs in persuading **jenmis** to sell

258 Statement of Puzhutini Kunyayu, 14 March 1896, L/PJ/6/422, 996/96, 10 April 1896, p 12.

land for mosque sites,[259] an issue which had previously led to outbreaks. The following year, the Moplahs of Kaipakancheri **amsom** in the "fanatic zone" brought a similar issue to the notice of the collector via the **Islam Sabha** at Ponnani.[260]

In 1915, however, the period of abstention from violence which the British appear to have won by the legislation of the late nineteenth century came to an end with the outbreak of that year, following by another in 1919. It had been clear for some time that even the limited protection conferred on the tenant by the 1887-1900 legislation had diminished as **jenmis** discovered ways of circumventing its provisions. As C. A. Innes observed of the Tenant's Improvements Act, it had at first "put the **jenmi** in a difficult position" so that naturally he "set his wits to work to find ways of evading it and he has partly succeeded."[261]

The power of the big **jenmi**, still very great even after the legislation of 1887-1900, made such circumvention (after some experience of the working of the **Jenmi** Registration Act) possible in the case of the incidence of the land revenue. In 1915-16 the newly appointed Court of Wards Manager of the Guruvayur Devaswom estate discovered that, under the Zamorin, estate tenants holding **kanam** demises had been required to pay the assessment by the terms of documents they had been forced to accept, in spite of the registration in the name of the **jenmi**.[262] By 1918 this practice was "becoming daily more general" and in practice an estimated two-thirds of the land revenue was being collected from tenants.[263]. In the case of the Guruvayur Devaswom estate, **verumpattom** tenants who

259 Govt. Order No 407, MJP 7 March 1902, p 22.

260 A. F. Pinhey to Chief Sec., 19 March 1903, MJP No 1792, 30 November 1903, p 210.

261 Innes to Sec., Commissioner of Land Revenue and Forests, 26 August 1911, MRP No 9 (Conf.), 2 January 1914, p 26.

262 Administration Report for **fasli** 1325 (1915-16) 18 October 1916, MCWP No 55, 9 December 1916, p 5.

263 Resolution of Board of Revenue, 29 July 1918, MRP No 4007, 18 December 1918, p 11.

were under no obligation to pay the assessment had been compelled to do so in many cases by an illegal arrangement between the **kariastan**s (agents) of the estate and **amsom** officials involving unlawful remuneration to the latter.

Among the many ways in which the Tenants' Improvements Act was rendered impotent, one method was to discount the higher rate for improvements by increasing rents. Another manoeuvre involved obliging tenants to 'agree' in new lease deeds to clauses stating, falsely, that they had already been paid in consideration for improvements yet to be made. Above all, since, in comparison with garden lands, improvements on wet lands were normally of trifling value, the **jenmi** could resume full control over the latter (and through these over the tenant) by abrogating the traditional practice of granting both kinds of cultivation on the same lease. Instead, at the time for renewal of leases, separate demises for wet lands and for garden lands were issued. Under these circumstances the efficacy of the act could persist only as long as existing leases were not replaced by new ones incorporating such circumventing clauses. As collector Bradley realised in 1894 the twelve-year period of the **kanam** lease, and a large number of **verumpattom** demises, was critical for the successful operation of the act.[264] It seems not entirely coincidental therefore that in 1915, not long after the end of the twelve-year period from 1900 (the date of the amended act) Moplah outbreaks resumed.[265]

Moreover, there is evidence that the effect of the passing of a tenancy Act in 1914 in Cochin state, purporting to confer fixity of tenure on certain categories of **kanamdar**, was to create apprehension among the **jenmis** of Malabar that similar measures were to follow there. (In fact the government of Madras rejected Innes' proposals

264 Bradley to Sec., Commissioners of Land Revenue, 31 January 1894, MJP No 2374 (Conf.), 1 October 1894, p 1.

265 The exact timing was determined by other factors, see below p 137.

of 1915[266].) The result seems to have a movement to convert **kanam** holdings to inferior tenancies-at-will and a consequent increase in discontent which helped end the previous constitutional period.

Conclusion

As a form of resistance to **jenmi** power the Moplah outbreak was crude and unsophisticated. It was subject to no fine control, leadership was elementary or non-existent, demands were formulated in a haphazard way, organisation was of the most rudimentary and **ad hoc** kind. Moreover, it was useful only as a rough and ready way of limiting the **exercise** of the **jenmi's** power, not of permanently reducing or eliminating that power, which was sustained by the rights bestowed on the **jenmi** by government. Only if British rule in Malabar could be ended or a massive change effected in the administration's policy of cultivating the **jenmi** as a "political force on the side of government"[267] could the latter be achieved. But it was evident that in the last analysis the administration would act decisively against the **jenmis** only if it were clear that support for them was more likely to weaken than strengthen British rule. Any such massive change in British policy could be brought about only by posing a threat to that rule.

That the materials for the creation of such a threat existed in Malabar, officials well-acquainted with the district were ready to acknowledge. In 1844 collector Conolly spoke of the "considerable number of needy and lawless men, Moplahs in especial" in the outbreak zone ready to rise "at any time" against government "if a sufficient prospect of plunder and impunity were held out to them".[268] But though an outbreak of necessity ended in physical clash with the forces of authority, the objective

266 Govt. Order No. 3021, (Conf.), MRP 26 September 1917, p 6.

267 See above p 23.

268 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 6 February 1844, MJP No 187, 8 March 1844, p 752.

was not to eliminate government power but self-immolation at the hands of authority. In 1849, with the whole country at their feet after the utter defeat of the sepoys sent against them, Manjeri Athan Gurikal's gang made no attempt to seize control, but merely awaited more troops so as to die in "fair fight with the Cirkar", as the Gurikal put it.[269] As a challenge to British rule the Moplah outbreak was mere ritual.

In 1880 the petition threatening, in the absence of agrarian reform, a bloodbath in Malabar[270] prompted one local official to suggest the preconditions for defiance of British power beyond formality:

> "Our safety lies in the want of leaders, in the want of organisation, and in the knowledge of the Moplahs themselves, that any attempt at rebellion must end in failure".[271]

In fact the history of the deteriorating relationship of the Ernad Moplah with British rule from its very inception in 1795 indicates that of Wigram's three conditions only the last, belief in the possibility of victory, was the great desideratum for insurrection by the Moplahs after their attempt to challenge British dominion directly in 1800-02.

269 Report of Robinson, 18 October 1849, **loc cit,** p 4937.

270 See above p 26.

271 H. Wigram, Officiating District Judge, South Malabar, to chief Sec., 8 November 1880, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures,** p 17.

CHAPTER 2

THE ERNAD MOPLAH AND BRITISH RULE BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS INTO THE SOUTH MALABAR INTERIOR

Part 1: The First Moplah Rebellion against British Rule in Malabar, 1800-02

Defiance of British power by the Moplah agricultural population of interior south Malabar dates from the earliest period of the rule of the East India Company in the district, the decade after the muslim ruler of Mysore, Tippu Sultan, ceded Malabar in 1792.

The mere fact that British rule replaced Tippu's administration in the province inevitably gave rise to apprehension among the Ernad Moplahs since Mysorean hegemony had provided them with unique opportunities to advance their interests as the expense of the high caste **jenmi** hierarchy. The earliest British administration of the district noted that, because of Tippu's persecution in 1788-89 of the Malabar hindus,[1] many of the **jenmis,** who were nearly all of that religion, "were reduced to the necessity of relinquishing every thing and of taking refuge in Travancore"[2] where a hindu prince maintained the independence of Mysore. Since the "brahmin land-holders, as well as many of the Nayars" were prevented from fear of their Mysorean rulers "from ever trusting their persons at the Mohammedan Cutcheries",[3] Tippu's officers were

1 Tippu in that year attempted a forcible conversion campaign directed against Malabar hindus, at least those of high caste. Entries for 14 July and 20 July 1788, G/37/7, **Tellicherri Factory Records**, pp 183-84.

2 **Report of Joint Commission of 1792-93,** Vol II, p 4.

3 Offices for public business.

obliged to settle for land revenue purposes with **Kanamdars.** These 'farmers', as the British often called them, were, in south Malabar, very often Moplahs. Because of the hindu exodus, it was men such as these who in Tippu's time had "considerably augmented their formerly more circumscribed possessions" and had become "the principal land-holders" in interior south Malabar.[4]

In 1792, in the wake of victorious British arms, the hindu **jenmis** returned to Malabar from exile eager to reclaim their rights in their ancient landed estates. The servants of the East India Company responsible for the administration of the newly-won province quickly realised the danger of Moplah unrest should there be a general restoration of the dispossessed **jenmis.** It was observed that such a re-instatement would entail not only resistance but 'disaffection' and perhaps even "open rebellion" on the part of the "Mapilla Kanumkars" of interior south Malabar who, during the period of **jenmi** depression and exile, had "habituated themselves to the ideas of independent tenure".[5]

On assuming responsibility for the province, the new British administration was clearly anxious to secure the acquiescence to its sovereignty of the Moplah cultivating population of south Malabar. For their part, the chief men of the latter had expressed their disposition to place themselves under the rule of the Company and meet its revenue demands provided the **jenmis'** dues were not reimposed.[6] A basis for an understanding between the new government and the rural Moplahs of south Malabar therefore existed, especially since the superintendent of this part of the province, a Mr Stevens, favoured a course of maintaining the **kanamdars** in possession of the disputed lands to the exclusion of the **jenmis.**

4 **Report of Joint Commission of 1792-93,** Vol I, pp 163, 174 and 179.

5 **Ibid,** Vol I, pp 179-80 and Vol II, p 65.

6 Voucher No 39, W.G. Farmer's report on the nature of ancient Malabar tenures and of rent and revenue in Malabar, 25 February 1793, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures,** p 152.

In fact Stevens was over-ruled by his superiors who, on grounds of "justice and true policy", declared themselves in favour of "restoring these Jenmkars **(jenmis)** to their rights as far as the present state of the country will admit".[7] No doubt the exigencies of the Company's policy of collaboration with the former Hindu aristocracy of Malabar in the war which resulted in Tippu's cession of the province dictated a solution to the **jenmi-kanamdar** land dispute in favour of the former. Of the foremost of the returning hindu aristocrats, the Zamorin of Calicut, it was noted that his feelings were "for the Nairs, Namburis and Brahmins, who returned with him from banishment in Travancore, and not for the real cultivators of the land". Indeed, many of his family were themselves considerable **jenmis.**[8] It is therefore significant that when, in 1793, the British administration explained to the Zamorin their principles for a settlement of the **jenmi-kanamdar** problem, the Rajah and his family "fully agreed" to them "as fair and beneficial to the Jelmkaars **(jenmis).**" Under these rules only those Moplah usurpations which had occurred before 11 September 1787 were to be legalised. This made actionable what must have been the great majority of cases, which occurred when the hindu high-castes fled from Tippu's campaign of forcible conversion to Islam in 1788-89. The British now laid down that such returning **jenmis** as had not so far regained possession of their property, might claim from the **kanamdars** that share of produce the jenmis had received in 1788-89. The penalty stipulated for obduracy on the part of any **kanamdar** was judicial action to give the **jenmis** repossession of their lands "when the time they leased them for expires".[9]

7 'Report of Messrs. Duncan and Boddam (Malabar Commissioners) to Sir John Shore (Governor-General) on their arrival in Calcutta', 2 February 1794, supplement to **Report of Joint Commission of 1792-93,** Vol II, p 211.

8. W. G. Farmer's report, 25 February 1793, **loc cit,** p 153.

9 'Articles settled with regard to the JELMKAARS and to their share of the Revenue for (Malayali year) 969 (1793-94)', from the

In practice it seems unlikely that, for the first few years after 1792, when British power in their newly-acquired and turbulent province was still limited, the principles for settling the **jenmi-kanamdar** problem could be fully enforced. Certainly, as late as 1800, the Malabar commissioners reported that in the two "Moplah districts" of Velatre (which later became the northern part of Walluvanad **taluk)** and Ernad the Company's government was "far from being unequivocally established."[10] Apart from the constant law and order problem the British faced in Malabar during the first decade or so after 1792, the firm establishment of the Company's power in the province had also been inhibited by the decision in September 1794 to lease the majority of its districts for purposes of revenue collection to their ancient hindu rulers. Because of the failure of these chiefs to fulfil their engagements, the collections were, after five years experience of the experiment, placed under the sole control of the officers of the government. Even so, the earliest years of British rule in Malabar saw the influence of the Company's European servants undermined by that of the Rajas whom they had placed between themselves and the people.

The British policy from 1794 of reinstating hindu aristocrats whose main object was regaining their landed possessions in the "Moplah areas" might itself be thought likely to have resulted in a solution of the **jenmi-kanamdar** problem in favour of the former. In practice, though the leading Rajas attempted to reduce the Moplah usurpers almost as soon as Tippu's forces had been expelled from Malabar, the Moplahs were able, almost

Diary of the Malabar Supervisor, 28 October 1793, in Logan (ed.) **A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Other Papers of Importance relating to British Affairs in Malabar**, p 208.

10 'A List of the Districts of the Province of Malabar according to their usual Political Divisions', enclosure in Malabar Commissioners to Govt. of Madras, 14 August 1800, MBRP 29 December 1800, p 10791.

throughout the 1790s to resist the forces of the hindu chiefs with remarkable success. The south Malabar Moplahs scored a number of famous victories in pitched battle with the Rajas of the Zamorin's family. They were also able to continue their usurpations of landed property in the "Moplah districts" for several years after Tippu's cession of the province. Indeed, by 1796-97, it was reported by one British observer that the "power of the Rajahs" had been "nearly overwhelmed by the superior activity and numbers of the Mapillahs".[11] The hindu aristocrats during the 1790s had proved their inability to impose their own terms on their muslim subjects in south Malabar by exploiting the powers that had been placed in their hands by the revenue settlement of September 1794. Certainly, two years after this settlement, the Nambudiri **jenmis** in this area were still complaining to the British of their disappointment in failing to recover their lands from their Moplah usurpers.[12]

In fact the British, in their initial anxiety to placate the "Jungle Moplahs", as they called the muslim agriculturalist population of the southern "Moplah districts", had taken the precaution of recruiting them to a number of revenue and police posts, more especially in these areas where Moplahs were numerous and combative. Moreover, it would appear that, up to the final destruction of Tippu's **raj** in Mysore in 1799, British policy was if possible to avoid confronting the Moplahs with the Company's armed forces. The fall of Tippu's capital of Seringapatam in May 1799, however, set in motion a train of events which culminated in the adoption of a less conciliatory policy towards the Moplahs.

As long as Tippu was a power above the Ghats in neighbouring Mysore, the resistance of the Moplah usurpers to

11 A. Walker, 'Observations on the Administration of Malabar during the year 1796-97', n.d., **Walker Papers,** 181d8.

12 Walker to Wilkinson, President, Malabar Commission, 20 December 1796, item 16, folder '1796-99', unbound correspondence. 1754-99. box I, **ibid,** 180a1.

the returned hindu **jenmis** received no "effectual Check" from the new British rulers and the contest between the two rival groups remained unresolved.[13] The importance the Company's servants placed on the appeasement of the Moplah agriculturalist population of south Malabar was partly because of the threat to British control of the province posed by any accommodation on the Moplahs' part to the ambitions towards Malabar Tippu was suspected of still harbouring.[14] The presence so near at hand of the power under which, on balance, they had been able considerably to advance their interests was certainly felt by the "Jungle Moplahs" to be very much to their advantage. Moreover, in one well-documented case at least, the Moplah **kanamdar** interest was closely linked with the fortunes of the "Tiger of Mysore".

Elambulasherry Unni Mutta Muppan was one of those "farmer[s]" who, when the high-caste hindus had fled Malabar in Tippu's time, had become "effective proprietor[s]" of their land-holdings in the district of Velatre.[15] In 1786-87 it had been thought prudent, as a means of guaranteeing his good behaviour, to take him and 100 followers into the pay of Tippu's government on behalf of which he participated in 1791 in the war against the East India Company. After Tippu's cession of Malabar, Unni Mutta proved himself consistently inimical to British rule, his blustering defiance of which is rather well conveyed in a message the **Muppan** (elder, headman) sent a British officer who had restrained his levying 'taxes' in one part of Velatre:

> "For what reason you, your Nayars, head Chitties [a Hindu trading caste], other Chitties and Custom People have put a stop to my Makama[a tax]? [Unless

13 Opinion of J. W. Wye, Asst. in charge of Shernad, quoted in report of Major A. Walker, 15 April 1800, BPSP 17 June 1900, p 3180.

14 Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay to Earl of Mornington, Governor-General, 9 October 1799 (Private), **Wellesley Papers**, Add 13698, p 275.

15 **Report of Joint Commission of 1792-93**, Vol I, pp 265-66.

> the **status quo ante** is restored] I will take good care of you and your Chitties. Do not think that I have much fear either of you, your Battalion People or guards... I desire you to take care that no harm happens in Maquaram [a Malabar month] to you or your Chitties. Have you not heard of the Murder and Robbery committed even at the Cutcherry at Perumtalamanna? Even in your Dreams do not think to put a stop to what I do. Have you not heard of my Bravery?"[16]

Unni Mutta not only maintained seditious contact with Seringapatam but also showed what were clearly political ambitions of his own in defiance of British authority, conducting himself "more like an independent Chieftain, than a subject." [17] As the joint commissioners, not without mortification, expressed it in 1793:

> "What ideas he has of obedience may be judged by his flags, his Nekareh[18] and beating the Nobit,[19] as well as having in his pay, exclusive of Mappillas, several carnatic Sepoys."[20]

Even before the fall of Seringapatam in May 1799, antipathy on the part of south Malabar Moplahs to a power so clearly in favour of a restoration of the hindu **jenmi** had been unmistakable. However Moplah hostility to the Company's rule was exacerbated with the final defeat of Tippu. This circumstance was exploited under a new British policy of settling accounts with those Moplahs, a most

16 'Translate Ola [leaf writing] from Yelambullacherry Unie Moota to Mr. Mellingchamp the officer for his personal information', received 9 April 1798, BRP 16 October 1798, p 1590.

17 'List of names given by the Cotiote Paripanaad Rajah of those to whom Tippoo Sultan has sent Phirmaunds [presumably 'firmans', edicts]'. 9 February 1799, BPSP 22 March 1800, p 1634.

18 A kettle-drum, a mark of state.

19 Corruption of 'naubat', musical instruments sounding at the gateway of a great man at intervals.

20 **Report of Joint Commission of 1792-93**, Vol I, pp 260-61.

considerable group, whose defiance of the Company's legal code it had been thought necessary, as long as the Mysorean power remained intact, to some extent to indulge. News of the decisive crushing of the muslim power in Mysore had acted "with electric effect" on the rival castes in Malabar "inspiring the Nairs with hope, as much as it depressed the Mapillahs". During June 1799 "numerous Complaints against various Mopillas for murders and robberies were preferred and numbers Seized, who before could never be laid hold of."[21] It must have appeared to many Moplahs that the British, who had joined with the Nairs in celebrating "publicly and privately with every demonstration of joy, an event [Tippu's defeat] which tended as [the Moplahs] thought to the depression of their Cast,"[22] were now launched on an unambiguously anti-Moplah policy. Certainly, this was the construction on British behaviour placed by two leading Moplah **kanamdars.** Unni Mutta and Chemban Poker had both suffered personally in the new British "law and order" campaign, the former having had his property seized for revenue arrears and the latter having been driven into outlawry and his house destroyed by T. H. Baber, the Shernad assistant. In a communication at the beginning of 1800 to the Moplahs of one part of Ernad these two Moplahs warned that "'Since the last year' the Company's government had 'begun to persecute several of the Sect of Islam' which, since the oppression was increasing, would 'not be protected but destroyed.'"[23] Reports, which subsequent events seemed to show to be substantially correct,[24] soon began to circulate among the south Mala-

21 'Considerations on the late Mapilla Disturbances' by J. W. Wye, Malabar Translator, 5 February 1800, enclosure in report of Major Walker, 15 April 1800, **loc cit**, pp 3343-44.

22 Report of Major Walker, 15 April 1800, **loc cit**, p 3149.

23 'Ola addressed by Uny Moota and Chembum Poker to the Inhabitants of Ariacotta', 10 Makaram (January-February 1800) BPSP 17 June 1800, p 3227.

24 See below p 112.

bar Moplahs that it was the intention of the government to use armed bodies of Nairs to deal with their muslim antagonists.

In response to the new British policy there was established a loose confederation of a number of Moplah **Muppans** of south Malabar. These included Unni Mutta and Chemban Poker as well as Manjerry Athan Gurikal, a relation of the former, who had amassed landed property not only under Mysorean rule but also by exploiting his position as **darogah** (a high police and magisterial office) under the Company in Ernad. In November 1799, Athan Gurikal, who had just before witnessed the execution by the Company of his brother-in-law for an alleged crime committed more than three years previously, determined with his confederates to support each other in the event of an attempt to seize them. Meanwhile emissaries were sent out to rouse the south Malabar Moplahs against the Company. By January 1800 the Moplah combination had broken out in open defiance of British rule with an ambush of George Waddell, the southern superintendent of Malabar, and the destruction of the cantonment and **cutcherry** at Uragam. The fall of Seringapatam and the consequent attempt by the Company's servants to assert their authority over the recalcitrant rural Moplah population of South Malabar had provoked what proved to be the first insurrection by the latter in the period of British rule.

It is true that Company servants in Malabar not infrequently comforted themselves with the observation that the south Malabar Moplahs who from 1800 so directly challenged British authority were mere 'banditti'. In fact the real significance of the armed defiance of the Company by the **Muppans** of 1800 consisted in their understanding that they were thereby resisting the consolidation of a power favouring their subordination to the powerful high-caste hindu. As had shortly before been observed, the Moplah **Muppan**, perceiving that the hindu **jenmis** were viewed by the British government

"as the legal inheritors of the Country", apprehended that his high-caste antagonists might "by some future revolution recover their power".[25] However, as argued above,[26] it was sections of the rural Ernad Moplah community much wider than the substantial **kanamdar** interest which stood to lose by the re-imposition of the **jenmi** and his demands. In consequence, it is not surprising that the rebel bands of the 1800 period, though relatively small in numbers, commanded the active and enthusiastic support of the Ernad Moplah community at large. Further, the fact that the response to the attempt of the administration to gain mastery of the situation in interior south Malabar took the form of widely-based insurrection was certainly an indication of the Moplah estimate that resistance of this kind was not hopeless. Such a calculation, despite the elimination of the power of Tippu Sultan, was in fact a natural conclusion for the Ernad Moplah. The 1800 Moplah rebellion occurred at a time when the insurrection of the Pychy Rajah in north Malabar was a matter of considerable embarrassment to the British authorities. Moreover the Company's dominion was, even as late as 1800, so ill-established in Malabar that when, in that year, Alexander Walker was deputed to investigate the causes of the rising in Ernad he found much of the area practically **terra incognita** to the officials responsible for its administration.[27] Indeed, so conscious of their weakness in the south Malabar interior was the Company's commission in Calicut that, at an early stage of the insurrection, the possibility of "withdrawing (their) forces altogether and resigning the Manjerry Talook (part of Ernad) to Goorcul's influence" was apparently under consideration.[28]

25 Capt. A. Walker, Military Sec., to General Stuart, 24 August 1799, **Wellesley Papers**, Add 13682, pp 87-88.

26 See above p 67.

27 Walker to Mr Grant, 23 April 1800, set of letters 'Guzrat [sic] 1800', Box 1782-99, **Walker Papers**, 182d18.

28 Sec., Malabar Commissioners to J. W. Wye, Collector of Vellatre, etc., 3 November 1800, Malabar Records, Vol 2388, p 14, MRO.

Even so, the estimation of the Ernad Moplah of the likelihood of victory cannot have been as confident as the Malabar commission's desperate expedients might suggest. The actual participation in rebel hostilities was less than what proved to be the case in the heady days at the start of the rising of 1921 when, far from threatening to extend, British rule seemed in the process of collapse.[29] In fact the first "Moplah Rebellion" was suppressed without extreme difficulty. After several months of cat-and-mouse tactics by the British, renewed hostilities with Manjerry Athan Gurikal and his followers broke out when the latter launched attacks on the armed forces of the company and destroyed a vacated cantonment. However, the combination of **Muppans** which had been put together in December 1799-January 1800 proved, under the tensions of dissension and jealousy, to be short-lived and the rebellion took the form of a long period of desultory warfare waged by several bands of Moplah guerillas. Quite apart from the obstacle to centralised rebel organisation constituted by the jealousies of the Moplah **Muppans**, each with his own local power-base,[30] the problem of organising the provisioning for any length of time of the numbers which combination on a wider scale brought together, dictated a dispersed mode of conducting resistance to the Company. The insurrection ended in 1802 after the wiping out by government forces of the main Moplah leaders Unni Mutta, Athan Gurikal and Chemban Poker and the remnants of their rebel bands.

The consequences of this eventual open breach in relations between the Company and the "Jungle Moplah" were of far-reaching significance. Even before the revolt of 1800 British solicitude for the fate of the usurped high-caste hindu **jenmis** at the hands of the Moplahs might be barely concealed. As T. H. Baber, the official in charge of

29 See below p 162.

30 Athan Gurikal's base was the Manjeri area of Ernad, Chemban Poker's the Koyappa area of Shernad and Unni Mutta the Tiruvazhamkunnu area of Velatre (Walluvanad).

the south Malabar districts of Shernad and Ramnad, observed in October 1799 of Chemban Poker:

> "This man in particular is at this moment in possession of Estates to a vast amount without any Claim or Title to the greatest part of them, while the real and original proprietors are suffering much distress and are real objects of pity and compassion."[31]

In fact the British authorities, despite their proclaimed policy of neutrality towards the rival interests in Malabar, had, in the face of Moplah recalcitrance, failed to maintain such evenhandedness even in their public pronouncements. In particular, the action of T. H. Baber in December 1799 in publishing throughout his district a notification in which the Nairs were singled out as the general sufferers, seemed to lend credence to the belief that British conduct would "not in every instance appear without a bias".[32] However, from the time of the Moplah revolt of 1800, animus against the "Jungle Moplah" on the part of the company servants responsible for administering his homelands revealed itself more clearly. In 1801 the collector of Shernad, Betutnad and Parappanad stated his conviction that,

> "throughout the Southern Division of Malabar the Namboodrees and Nayrs and Their (Tier)... are the best and quietest subjects. I have never found any difficulty in managing these people, they are obedient and pay the dues to the Government without trouble; while on the Contrary the Mappillas are turbulent, prone to robbery and the revenue always more difficult to recover where they prevail."[33]

Most unequivocal of all was the advice (to an unknown corrrespondent) of Alexander Walker the army officer

31 Baber to C. Waddell, Acting Southern Supt., 28 October 1799, Malabar Collectorate Records, Vol No 8404, pp 52-53, MRO.

32 Report of Major Walker, 15 April 1800, **loc cit,** p 3150.

33 J. W. Wye to Board of Revenue, 4 February 1801, MRP 20 February 1801, pp 176-77.

who, as a member of the Malabar Commission, had been deputed to report on the insurrection of 1800:

> "I presume there are but few Moppillahs in Kanara [the district immediately north of Malabar]. If you wish to keep it peaceable and quiet prohibit that diabolical Cast from coming into it and by indirect means oblige those that may be there to leave it. This can easily be done by taxing them very heavily. Above all never give a public employment to one of the Cast. If permitted to settle in Kanara you will soon find them become numerous and then stealing Children, robberies and murders will follow. This caste of men are the cause [sic, curse] of Vellatre and Ernad."[34]

Nor did the developing British preference for the high-caste hindu interest as opposed to that of their muslim rivals reveal itself only in the casual expression of opinion by individual Company officials. Shortly after the outbreak in 1800 of the Moplah revolt, a decision was taken to rearrange the police establishment in the disturbed area in such a way as to end Moplah preponderance in it. Up to the time of the insurrection of 1800 it had been found necessary to come to terms with the still-unbroken dominant position of the Moplahs in interior south Malabar by vesting the charge of the police of that area in **darogahs** of that caste. The considerable powers of these officials, which included deciding civil suits to the extent of Rs 200 and the inflicting of corporal punishment, had been used to further the Moplah interest. Moreover, the fact that the **darogahs** had the "Payment and Sole Control" of their men in their own hands permitted their acquiring such a degree of power and influence as to be able to defy the government with little fear of punishment.[35] One outcome of the

34. A. Walker, 'Hints for Collection of Land Revenue', n.d., **Walker Papers, 184a4**, p 521. The reference to "Stealing Children" would appear to be a reference to the apparent practice of south Malabar Moplahs in the 1790s kidnapping Nair children for the purpose of selling them into slavery.

35 Report of Major Walker, 15 April 1800, **loc cit**, p 3183.

insurrection of 1800 was the decision of the administration to replace a police arrangement so hostile to the secure foundation of the Company's authority in the "Moplah districts" with another which was not only more useful in establishing British control, but which also became a model for all who in subsequent decades sought decisive means of defeating Moplah resistance.

Captain Watson's "Nair Corps", which operated against the Moplah insurgents of 1800-02, was made up very largely of hindus of "the most respectable Families[36] under European control. This highly mobile group of irregulars under the command of a man like Watson, who from long experience of Malabar had acquired intimate knowledge of the people and the country, was able in a very few years to defeat Moplah insurgency in south Malabar. It thereby opened the way for the achieving of one objective of the servants of the Company,[37] the return of the high-caste hindu **jenmis** to their landed estates in the zone where Moplah resistance to their restoration had been successful for so long.

Although this eventual restoration of the **jenmi** in interior south Malabar must have confirmed the "Jungle Moplah" in his antipathy to the power responsible, all the indications are that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the economic position of the **jenmi** was precarious. The necessity of having to flee Tippu's campaign of forcible conversion in 1788 had dictated the disposal of their estates by high-caste **jenmis** on terms very unfavourable to themselves. For trifling sums their **kanamdars** were able to obtain bonds stipulating such a low level of **patom** ('rent') that in a large number of cases the amount specified was insufficient even to meet the interest payable on the **kanam** amount (lent by the **kanamdar** to the jenmi). Under these

36 T. Warden, Principal Collector, Malabar to Sec., Judicial, 17 March 1808, MJP 17 March 1808, p 1358.

37 Malabar Commission to G. Waddell, 10 June 1799, BRP 19 July 1799, p 635.

circumstances the **jenmi**s, failing regularly to pay the balance due to their **kanamdars,** found their estates so heavily encumbered with debt that one British Collector remarked that "from the highest condition" they had been "reduced to a mere nothing but the empty Sound of Title."[38]

In fact the position of the **jenmi** was by no means so hopeless. As long as his right to resume his lands on repayment of his debts to the **kanamdar** was undisputed under Malabar customary law, the **jenmi,** under conditions of high profits from agriculture caused by rising prices for farm produce, might be able to regain full control of his estate. In the process the **kanamdar** would be reduced from being landowner in all but name, to a mere tenant liable to eviction virtually at his **jenmi**'s pleasure. When, in the period after 1818,[39] precisely these developments began to make themselves felt, the ascendancy of the **jenmi,** so long resisted by the south Malabar Moplahs, could begin to be re-established. Moreover, the restored **jenmi** found he could now operate within a legal framework which permitted him, if he were prepared to flout Malayali custom, to take a competition rent.[40] Thus, by the 1820s and 1830s, the fear of the Moplah agriculturalist population that the Company's rule would entail a **jenmi** resurgence had been found to be amply justified. For the rest of the century it required little to expose the depth of anti-government feeling which existed among the inhabitants of the 'Moplah zone'.

Part 2: The Period of the Moplah Outbreak, 1836-1919

Even before extraordinary measures were adopted to deal with the Moplah outbreak, the smouldering antago-

38 T. W. Baber to Board of Revenue, 31 January 1801, MBRP 2 March 1801, p 2362.

39. See above p 66.

40 See above p 38.

nism of the Moplah to British rule had been noticed. In 1822 Sir Thomas Munro, the governor of Madras, had referred to the Moplahs as the "worst race in Malabar" and the "most hostile" to British dominion.[41] Two decades later it had been observed that the "lower order of Moplahs and particularly those of the inland Talooks" were "not to be depended upon" should an apparent opening for their acting against the British occur.[42] When the Madras government in the mid-1850s finally felt impelled to deal with "Moplah fanaticism" via the "tremendous penalties"[43] of the Moplah acts, it merely intensified the existing hostility to British rule among the Muslim population of Ernad.

In 1851, when a group of Hindus from the "fanatic zone" demanded a series of repressive measures, including the confiscation of the property of outbreak participants and the disarming of the local Moplahs, as a means of checking their outbreaks the government of Madras pointed out that such measures would only aggravate the evils they were intended to remove.[44] However, in the following year, outbreaks spread to hitherto unaffected north Malabar with an exceptionally murderous disturbance in Kottayam **taluk.** In consequence, the Madras government reluctantly decided on the appointment of T. L. Strange's Special Commission, one outcome of which was the Moplah Acts of 1854 which provided for measures in line with those of the hindu petition of 1851.

Although the Moplah acts certainly succeeded in reducing Moplah readiness to commit outbreaks, the nature of the enactments was such that aggravation of Moplah bitterness towards British rule was inevitable. The object of the acts, to which especial importance was attached, was "to enlist the fears and interests of every Moplah...

41 President's Minute, MRP 16 July 1822, p 1871.

42 T. L. Strange, then a judge in Malabar, to Malabar Collector, 27 May 1842, MJP October 1842, p 4942.

43 Logan, **Malabar Manual**, Vol 1, p 584.

44 Minute No 720, 2 December 1851, MJP p 4358.

on the side of order."[45] British officials who supported such measures acknowledged that legislation of this kind involved the risk of injustice to individuals. This was unavoidably the case since the provision which extended to Moplah outbreaks. Madras Regulation II of 1819, described by the government pleader in 1855 as "perhaps the most arbitrary act within my knowledge",[46] permitted the deportation at the government's pleasure of anyone merely suspected of intending to participate in an outbreak. Moreover injustice to the innocent was entailed in the provision for collective fining of amsoms in which disturbances occurred, whilst at least one Malabar magistrate considered it unfair is that only Moplah residents were liable to this penalty.[47]

But official measures tending to direct Moplah fanatical hatred towards British rule were not restricted to the deportations and fines of the Moplah acts. To prevent the remains of outbreak participants becoming objects of veneration by the Moplah populace it was the practice to dispose of the bodies by burning. This was sometimes carried out in the most provocative manner, as when, being gibbeted in the heart of the fanatic zone, the corpses of the assassins of collector Conolly in 1855 were publicly burnt in a Moplah suburb of Calicut. In this particular instance the Company's servant on the spot, C. Collett, had attempted unsuccessfully to dissuade the government of Madras from pursuing this course. Collett argued that since the burning of the body was "regarded by the Moplahs with much horror" the execution of administration's orders would greatly offend caste prejudices with a result "similar to what usually follows religious persecution"—to "excite a degree of sympathy which would not

45 Minute No 352, 16 May 1854, MJP p 1530.

46 J. B. Morton to Chief Sec., 1 December 1855, MJP No 925, 8 December 1855, p 4874.

47 H. Bradley, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 6 June 1894, MJP Nos 2186-92, 8 September 1894, p 118.

otherwise have existed".[48] In spite of such warnings and the unease occasionally expressed by the government of India, the policy of burning the corpses of **shahid** was continued up to the end of the outbreak period.

A further measure regarded (by the Court of Directors in 1850)[49] as calculated to produce a sense of unfair treatment at British hands was the disarming of the Moplahs. This was eventually carried out in 1885 after the use of firearms in one outbreak had increased apprehension about the risks run by the government forces responsible for the task of suppression. Although this disarmament was a general one, involving the receipt of firearms and swords from **all** inhabitants of four south Malabar taluks,[50] the strategy of issuing all subsequent licences only to carefully selected individuals with substantial property effectively discriminated against the Moplahs as a whole. Thus, of the 588 licenses for firearms issued in the disarmed zone in the first few months of the operation of the new policy in 1885, only five went to muslims, who formed 36 per cent of the population of the four **taluks.**[51] Once again British administrators responsible for Malabar had felt it necessary to adopt policies which earlier officials had warned against as infringing on what the Moplah believed to be their vital interests.[52]

In their anxiety to protect the high-caste hindu notables from Moplah violence, the British authorities, whilst rejecting the more provocative proposals for dealing with the muslim community such as mass deportation from

48. Collett to Chief Sec.. 27 September 1855, MJP No 716, 3 October 1855, p 3666.

49. Court of Directors to Govt. of Madras, 17 April 1850, MJP No 419, 3 July 1850, p 2040.

50. The notably 'frantic' taluks of Ernad and Walluvanad plus the two adjacent ones having a large Moplah population, Ponnani and Calicut.

51. Logan to Chief Sec., 1 May 1885, MJP No 1337, 21 May 1885, p 100.

52 Minute of 8 December 1798, BPSP 11 December 1798, pp 4809-10.

certain areas,[53] and the razing of mosques[54] had thought it necessary to resort to measures the great object of which was "to operate in terrorem".[55] In attempting so to deter the commission of outbreaks, the 'Jungle Moplah' was to be "coerced into submission"[56] despite the hazards the policy entailed.

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that, on the one occasion when a severe outbreak resulted in the recording of Moplah attitudes at the time of the disturbance, an unmistakable sense of oppression at the hands of authority should have been revealed. The reports on the 1896 outbreak indicate that remarks such as "there is no room for Mussalmans in the country," "we Mussalmans can't abide here", "there (is) no standing room in the country", "We have had much oppression at the hands of the white folk" and "A dozen of us Moplahs can't meet anywhere but we are at once suspected to be plotting an outbreak!"[57] were current among the Moplahs of the outbreak area, whether participants or otherwise.

The intensified antagonism to the British administration in Malabar entailed in the policy of repressing Moplah 'fanaticism' was disclosed in the most unequivocal fashion by the two outbreaks in which a collector became the object of attack. The murderers of H. V. Conolly in 1855 in the weeks leading up to the assassination appear to have made it clear that they were motivated to "go out" to avenge the hounding from the country of the Mambram Tangal, Syed Fazl, for which the collector bore the chief responsibility. As they told one Pathooma, a Moplah

53 Logan to Chief Sec., 7 February 1885, MJP Nos 1169-74, 2 May 1885, p 25.

54 Collett to T. Clarke, District Magistrate, 20 October 1855, MJP No 862, 27 November 1855, pp 4618-19.

55 Strange to Sec., Judicial, 25 September 1852, MJP No 483, 23 August 1853, p 4635.

56 J. D. Sim, member, Council of Governor of Madras, minute, MJP No 1606-A, 28 August 1874.

57 Reports of Winterbotham, 10 April 1896 (loc cit, pp 12, 16 and 18) and 5 May 1896 (MJP no 1567, 30 September 1896, p 56).

woman who asked why they had marked H. V. Conolly for such treatment:

> "Is it not the case...that out Pookoyah (Syed Fazl) is not to be seen in the country?"[58]

Moreover, during the six weeks that the assassins spent before the murder, traversing an extensive tract of south Malabar "with the undisguised design" of accounting for Conolly, they were "feted, encouraged, prayed with, and consecrated to the deed" by "hundreds and probably... thousands" of Moplahs.[59] In the 1915 outbreak, in which C. A. Innes narrowly escaped assassination, the perpetrators had felt impelled to attempt the collector's life after he had acted to restore a young Tien 'convert' to his relations.

The 1915 outbreak, not uniquely, coincided with a period of unrest among the Ernad Moplahs when rumours of the impending downfall of the British **Raj** were circulating. In a series of contemporary confidential letters[60] Innes revealed that the "fanatic zone" Moplah was retailing the 'news' that the British army had been destroyed and the king-emperor captured, and that the Germans and their allies were winning 'all along the line' and were on their way to Malabar to give the Moplahs there a free hand, entailing the ending of rent and revenue payments. In fact, the rural Moplah population of interior south Malabar was highly sensitive to the slightest challenge to British power, real or insubstantial. Rumour of every armed collision with the forces of their imperial masters raised hopes that the white man's rule in Malabar was about to be ended; hopes so desperate as to be, at times, insusceptible to reason. Thus, in 1914, Innes discovered the "ignor-

58 Statement of Pathooma, 14 February 1856, Malabar Collectorate Records, Vol No 7347, p 185, MRO.

59 Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, 20 May 1856, MJP No 545, 20 May 1856, pp 3301-02.

60 MJP No 360 (Conf.), 18 February 1915. pp 12, 36, 61 and 68, MRO.

ant Mappillas" to be "amazingly perverse and stupid" in the tenacity with which they clung to the belief in British military defeat despite a lecture tour by a Moplah sub-assistant inspector of schools.[61]

The form of response of the "fanatic zone" Moplah to reports of armed conflicts involving the British depended on the seeming proximity and imminence of each threat to British rule. The far-off thunder of rumoured colonial wars might stimulate the kind of mass restlessness which was so often the signal for an outbreak. This appears to have been the case in 1884-85 when fanatical preaching in Malabar about the exploits of the Sudanese Mahdi and the "fullfilment of the Prophet's words" contributed to a state of excitement among the Moplahs which saw the perpetration of three outbreaks in a period of only twelve months.[62]

This instance of their reaction to rumours of a pretender to the title of the muslim Messiah is by no means the only example of the attraction the idea of a heaven-sent deliverer had for the Moplahs. Belief in "a Mahdi who is going to conquer the world for Islam"[63] seems to have been endemic among the Moplahs. On occasions when, as in the final stages of defeat of the 1921-22 rebellion, no earthly candidate appeared to be forthcoming to supply the means of salvation, predictions of the imminent arrival of an unspecified Mahdi who would save the Moplahs from the consequences of British rule could gain certain currency.[64]

In another case of desperate resort to messianism, in the 1840s, "a sect of enthusiasts" which sprang up among "the lower orders of Moplahs" in one part of the "fanatic

61 Innes to A. Butterworth, 30 December 1914, **ibid**, p 17.

62 Logan to Chief Sec., 17 July 1885, MJP No 2725, 8 October 1885, p 6.

63 Innes to Acting Chief Sec., 30 September 1912, MJP No 1780 (Conf.), 1 November 1912, p 21, MRO.

64 R. H, Hitchcock, **A History of the Malabar Rebellion**, 1921, pp 131 and 136.

zone",[65] bore the hallmarks of a millenarian movement of what has been called the 'activist' type. [66] The members of this "**Hal Ilakkam**" or frenzy-raising sect displayed a bizarre but evidently fervent belief in the miraculous. This manifested itself in a conviction of their being endowed with prodigious powers such as that of flight and the ability to conjure food from nothing. Portents, including the springing up of mosques at night and complete darkness for a period of days, were also confidently anticipated.[67] It would appear that the adherents of the sect, the **Halar**, considered themselves to be in a period of preparation (involving activities such as proselytism, the abandoning of their secular occupations and the meeting together for devotional purposes many times a day)[68] for the seizure of control of the country. The arrival of a mysterious ship with the necessary arms, provisions and money for 40,000 men was awaited in the belief that could that number in the meantime be recruited the country might be conquered. The happy state that would thereby ensue was cast in terms typical of the "Jungle Moplah's" conception of the millenium. After the final Armaggedon "the Hindus would then totally vanish".[69]

In fact although district magistrate Conolly saw the movement as potentially dangerous, **Hal Ilakkam** seems to have posed only a trifling threat to British rule. It is true that the adherents of the sect seem to have shown an

65 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 4 November 1843, MJF No 69, 27 January 1844, pp 193-94.

66 Peter Worsley, **The Trumpet Shall Sound**, p 12.

67 'Particulars of the Hal Ilakkam among the Mappillas in Chernad taluk and the neighbouring parts', by a 'native subordinate', November 1843, in W. Logan, **Malabar Manual**, Vol I, pp 561-62.

68 Conolly to Sec., Judicial, 4 November 1843, **loc cit**, p 194 and 198. Significantly some of the devotions took place at the tomb of a rebel of 1800, Chemban Poker, 'Particulars etc', **loc cit**, Vol I, p 562.

69 **'Particulars etc', loc cit**, Vol I, pp 561-62. Not surprisingly this itself proved to be some inducement for numbers of hindus to convert.

attitude of resistance to authority and impatience of subordination resulting in cases of assault on government servants. Even so, few Moplahs seem to have been prepared to commit themselves to a body promising such an incredible means of impending salvation and it is possible that the number of **Halar** may not greatly have exceeded a hundred.[70] The sect was, in fact, impracticable not only as a mass movement (since it required retirement from secular occupation) but also as a durable one (since the promised miracles inevitably ended in ludicrous failure). Moreover, the death in 1844 (soon after the sect attracted the attention of the authorities) of the elder Tirurangadi Tangal[71] in whose company the **Halar** apparently intended to engage in final battle with "the Kafirs" may well have helped doom the sect to extinction.

Moplah challenge to British rule more formidable than the millenial preparations of the **Halar** or the stylised defiance of the outbreak was likely to materialise only in the event of the Moplahs perceiving the **Raj** to be shaken to its foundations on a sub-continental scale. Up to almost the end of the outbreak period of 1836-1919 such an episode occurred only once in 1857-58. In fact, although Malabar has been said to have been in "a very disaffected state" because of the Mutiny,[72] nothing more challenging occurred than a projected 'fanatical' outbreak in Ernad in August 1857 involving eight plotters. The evidence for the prosecution of the eight includes the arresting claim of one eye-witness that on Friday 28 August 1857 three of the prisoners, in conclave in Ponmala mosque, used seditious language such as:

> "The mutinies in the north have thrown the Government into the greatest confusion, and caused it great

70 On the other hand they were "made much of" in the period when the mysterious ship was expected; 'Particulars etc', **loc cit**, Vol I, p 562.

71 The **Tangal's** successor, Syed Fazl, did not pretend to the character of a saintly fakir until 1849 and was therefore presumably not a suitable object for **Halar** hopes.

72 Logan, **Malabar Manual**, Vol I, p 579.

> difficulty and distress. If we now make an outbreak, **it will be difficult to bring men against us.** Now is the time to act as our friends and connexions have acted."[73] [Emphasis mine—C.W.]

Unless this evidence is concocted, this apparent desire by the plotters to act very differently to the way their "friends and connexions" had behaved in previous outbreaks, by choosing an occasion when self-immolation at the hands of authority was thought to be unlikely, is most interesting. It is possible that this indicates a potential for transmutation in the outbreak from merely formal challenge to British rule to something more substantial under circumstances in which defiance of the Raj seemed less desparate.[74] Unfortunately the record provides little further indication of the objectives of this group of plotters who, in any case, seem to have commanded such little support from their community that it was Ponmala Moplahs themselves who defeated the plot to "go out" by informing the authorities. The Ernad Moplah was clearly in no mood in 1857-58 to take advantage of the embarrassment of the Raj. Indeed, so confident were the authorities about the state of the district that it was even considered safe to send the Malabar Police Corps, which had been raised to deal with Moplah outbreaks, to the nearby district of Canara to help in suppressing rebellion there. Without doubt Malabar owed its relative tranquillity to the stunning impact on the Moplahs of the first implementation of the provisions of the Moplah acts after the murder of Conolly in late 1855. In the year before the outbreak of the mutiny it had been reported that "so far from the Moplahs designing to injure anyone, they

73 Govt. versus the eight, 5 October 1857, MJP No 1359, 16 October 1857, pp 144-46.

74 That this is not idle speculation is suggested by the way in which the disturbance, which had all the initial marks of a 'fanatical' outbreak, at Pukkotur in July-August 1921, proved to be the opening act of insurrection. See below p 159.

are themselves in great fear, and overawed by the measures of government."[75] The projected outbreak of August 1857 was thwarted by members of a community apprehensive of again experiencing the penalties of the Moplah act.

Conclusion

The source of the antagonism which characterised the relationship between the Ernad Moplah and British rule in Malabar was the facility the latter extended to the rise of high-caste hindu power after its nadir under Tippu in 1788-89. British dominion favoured and facilitated the reimposition in the south Malabar interior of the **jenmi** and his demands. It also provided, through the concept of the competition rent, a means for the expansion of those demands which was both novel and exceptionable. Moreover, this basic conflict between the 'Jungle Moplah' and the British was aggravated both by unlawful Moplah resistance to the **jenmi** and by the measures the administration considered necessary for the suppression of this refractoriness, whether in the period of early Moplah insurrection or that of the outbreak from 1836.

The disaffection of the Ernad Moplah was expressed in challenge to the ruling power reaching the level of insurrection only when some assurance of success was promised. After the rebellion in the earliest period of the consolidation of British power, the 'Jungle Moplah' was for long over-awed. As Commissioner Graeme observed in 1820:

> "The remembrance on the part of the inhabitants of former humiliation experienced from our Government, the knowledge of the existence of a superior power which is only lying dormant, but is capable of being easily roused to efficient action when circumstances may demand its energies, are the security for the

75 T. Clarke, Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 15 May 1856 MJP No 607, 7 June 1856, p 1664.

degree of obedience which is shown to the Government."[76]

The nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth form a period in which, except for one moment, British power seemed unshakable to the Moplah and rebellion in consequence hopeless. The single moment of hope was 1857-58. The British owed their good fortune in avoiding serious trouble in Malabar during the mutiny to the effect on the 'Jungle Moplahs' of a novel measure of repression. When, in the immediate post-first world war period, they faced another great challenge to their control of the Indian sub-continent, the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement, they were not to be so fortunate.

76 Graeme to Chief Sec., 1 August 1820, MRP 29 August 1820, p 3274.

CHAPTER 3

THE ERNAD MOPLAH AND THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN MALABAR: CONFLICT AND COINCIDENCE OF INTEREST, 1916-20

Part 1: The Agrarian Issue

The Indian National Congress was late in establishing its influence in Malabar. As late as 1915, according to K. P. Kesava Menon the secretary of the Calicut organisation of the party at the time, there was very little Congress work in the district.[1] Not until Britain's dependence on Indian support after the outbreak of the great war was clearly exposed and the hopes of the 'political classes' for rapid constitutional advance thereby raised was the district drawn into nationalist agitation. It was the Home Rule movement which first excited significant political activity in Malabar and in May 1916 the first Malabar district conference, held at Palghat, was presided over by Mrs Besant.

Despite rhetorical claims to represent a wide cross-section of Malabar society, the Palghat conference in fact drew its support massively from the 'Pattar' (Tamil) brahmin landed and professional classes of Palghat **taluk**, though Nairs of a similar social background from this and other centres were also well-represented. An analysis of the list of delegates reveals that 76 per cent were from Palghat **taluk**. Pattars made up 64 per cent of the attendance and Nairs 25 per cent. Of the 358 delegates whose occupation is known 27 per cent were returned as land-

1 Interview with K. P. Kesava Menon, Kozhikode, 11 December 1974.

lords and land agents and 33 per cent **vakils** (advocates), the rest being other members of the professional, propertied and 'middle' classes, merchants, traders, bankers, managers, factory owners, planters, clerks, civil servants, teachers, physicians and journalists. Ten of the 358 were described as 'landlords', a term which might mean either **jenmi** or tenant. Of the total number of delegates (454) only nine had names clearly identifiable as muslim. Of these, seven were merchants of the Ravuthan trading community of Palghat, a group so quiet and law-abiding and distinct from the Moplahs that Ravuthan residents in **amsoms** fined under the Moplah acts were exempted. Only two delegates, a merchant and special magistrate of Palghat **taluk** and a trader from Ponnani appear to have been Moplahs. It is certain that from Ernad and Walluvanad there was no Moplah representation, the delegates from the 'fanatic zone' being high-caste hindu **jenmis** and **vakils.**[2]

The aloofness of the 'Jungle Moplah' from the political movement of 1916 is not surprising when the self-proclaimed objectives and character of the Palghat conference are considered. For a community with an enduring history of boldly-asserted grievance towards British rule, the anxious protestations at Palghat of loyalty to the foreign connection cannot have been alluring. For a group for which sharp social and economic antagonism was cast in communal terms, the pervasive hindu allusion and symbolism of the conference, described (to cheers) by one delegate as "like the birth of Ramachandra to Dasaratha",[3] would have been repellent. Above all the first Malabar district conference was clearly dominated by the high-caste hindu **jenmis** and **vakils** whom the Ernad Moplah had for so long identified as the source of his ills.

The preponderance of the **jenmi** interest at Palghat was indicated by the constant re-iteration of the proprietary

2 List of delegates, **Palghat Conference Report,** pp 118-43.
3 Speech of C. Seshayya, **ibid, p 106.**

claims of the Malabar landlord to the virtual exclusion of even reference to the tenantry. Moreover, hostility to the traditional form of resistance of the 'Jungle Moplah' to **jenmi** power was expressed in reference to the "unruly elements which occasionally disturb the peace of the country" and "the Mappilla disturbances which have been a disgrace to our district".[4] Fulsome praise was accorded[5] to T. L. Strange, the Malabar commissioner of 1852, whose report on Moplah outbreaks led to the passing of the Moplah acts and whose name was a byword for the repression of Moplahs.[6]

The other major social group represented at Palghat, the professional classes, had attracted intensified hostility from the rural Moplah since the late nineteenth century. Almost throughout the outbreak period of 1836-1919 the Moplah tenantry had often felt the exercise of the oppressive power of the **jenmi** by way of the **vakil** and the public official. As early as 1852 it had been observed that it was "through the Courts, that the Hindu chiefly oppresses and annoys the inferior Moplah landholder or occupant".[7] In 1890 collector Winterbotham noted "the strong, probably unconscious, bias that the highest native officials have in favour of the **jenmi**, in all questions between landlord and tenant".[8] Moreover, by responding with violence to what he regarded as the misuse of power by high-caste hindu government servants, the 'fanatic zone' Moplah must have succeeded in further souring his relations with this group. One consequence of the Moplah proneness to 'break out' was the tendency

4 Kollengode Rajah's Address of Welcome, **ibid**, p 7.

5 Speech of P. K. Subramania Aiyar, **ibid,** p 44.

6 Even so, an assembly such as the Malabar district conference, dedicated as it was to challenging British autocracy in India, could hardly fail to condemn regulations as arbitrary as the Moplah acts. For resolutions calling for the repeal of these acts see **New India**, 26 April 1917, p 9 and 6 May 1919, p 8.

7 Minute of J. F. Thomas, member, Council of Governor of Madras, 3 November 1852, MJP No 483, 23 August 1853, p 4697.

8 Winterbotham to Chief Sec., 14 February 1890, MJP No 2530 11 December 1891, p 66.

of Malayali officials (and others), as one Malabar collector put it, to "regard everything done by a Moplah with suspicion" and to "see a Moplah outrage lurking behind every tree and in every shadow."[9] The practical consequences of such animus can have done nothing to allay the Ernad Moplah's sense of grievance towards those who manned the machinery of government. Inevitably, the rural Moplah tended to be vocal in his denunciation of officialdom whilst his mistrust of the courts was notorious. As the Court of Wards collector of the Zamorin's Estate observed in 1918:

> "Anyone who has seen the rustic Mapilla under cross examination in court will believe me when I say that he takes up the attitude of 'hostile witness' on the slightest suspicion of being entangled in an 'admission'".[10]

With the passing of the Tenants' Improvements acts of 1887 and 1900[11] collision between the Moplah tenant interest and that of the monied professional and trading classes who were later so heavily represented at the Palghat conference acquired a new dimension. The effect of the acts, by providing for the increased payment by the **jenmi** of the value of the tenant's improvements on eviction, had been to raise the cost to the **jenmi** of changing his tenant. The consequence had been for the **jenmi** to attempt to avoid this expense and trouble by resorting to **melcharths** or overleases, ie selling the right of eviction (often) to whomsoever could pay the highest price. Since the **melcharthdar** could speculate on recouping his outlay in buying the overlease from compensation for the improvements on the land when his own turn for eviction came, a vigorous market for **melcharths** grew up in the 1900s and 1910s. Official figures show that, in the years following the passing of the 1887 act, the filing of eviction suits on **melcharth** increased rapidly.

9 H. Moberly to Chief Sec., 2 July 1895, MPol. P No. 459 (Conf.), 11 July 1895, MRO.

10 J. A. Thorne to Sec. to Commissioner, Court of Wards, MRP No 3121, 4 September 1918, p 11.

11 See Chapter 1.

NUMBER OF SUITS FILED ON MELCHARTHS IN SOUTH MALABAR[12]

1891	54	1899	192	1907	282
1892	101	1900	182	1908	291
1893	69	1901	105	1909	409
1894	99	1902	131	1910	419
1895	136	1903	180	1911	500
1896	199	1904	202	1912	562
1897	139	1905	241		
1898	191	1906	234		

Moreover, the extent of the problem is not fully conveyed by these figures. Many suits covered 50 or 60 separate items of land, whilst not all **melcharths** were in evidence, the person coveting the land sometimes financing a suit for eviction in the **jenmi**'s name. Many of the overleases granted by the Zamorin of Calicut would not figure in the official statistics as **melcharths**. In deference to public opinion that this practice was iniquitous, the Zamorin preferred to give a written contract (**karar**) authorising a person to sue for eviction in his name and engaging to lease the land when recovered to the **karar**-holder.[13] Above all, the impact of the overleasing system on the condition of the Malabar tenantry cannot adequately be measured by the extent of involvement in judicial processes. Mere knowledge of the existence of the **melcharth** weapon in the hands of the **jenmi** was no doubt often sufficient for the reinforcement of his power over his tenantry, including the power to extort increased payments, which the overleasing system entailed.

Not surprisingly the **melcharth** was "condemned as an abomination by public opinion in Malabar[14] and **jenmis**

12 Sub-enclosure, A. Edgington, acting district judge, south Malabar to registrar, High Court, 12 August 1911, MRP (Conf.) No 9, 2 January 1914, p 7; Acting registrar, High court to Chief Sec., 20 August 1913, MRP No 2660, 5 September 1913, pp 3-4.

13 J. A. Thorne, collector, Zamorin's Estate to Sec., to Commissioner, Court of Wards, **loc cit**, p 13.

14 C. A. Innes, Acting Malabar Collector to Sec., Commissioner of Land Revenue and Forests, 26 August 1911, MRP (Conf.), No 9, 2 January 1914, p 23.

stood at bay on the issue. It was "wholly against the principles" of the Court of Wards to grant overleases.[15] The reaction of the tenantry exposed to the operation of the overleasing system is indicated in collector Innes' remark that the granting of **melcharths** led to "bitterness, bad blood and criminal cases" not to mention Moplah outbreaks.[16] In one specific case, an influential Hindu landlord of Malappuram, Para Nambi, was in 1902 admittedly granting dozens of **melcharths.** He became, in consequence, the object of tenant hostility expressed in a number of both anonymous and signed petitions sent to the authorities complaining of these overleases and his 'oppression' of his tenants and warning of his impending murder.[17]

Much of the animosity overleasing aroused among the Malabar tenantry was directed towards the **jenmi.** On the other hand there can be no doubt that the **melcharthdars,** "very often speculators willing to meet the expenses of litigation and recover the property [from the tenants], to the common advantage of themselves and the [jenmi]",[18] were by no means exempt from the prevailing hostility. In one recorded case criminal action resulted when the attempt of one recipient of a **melcharth** to execute decrees for eviction from the 97 separate items of land under the overlease resulted in what were tersely described as "collisions".[19] The **melcharthdar** in this case was a merchant in the Calicut bazaar and there can be no doubt that those who joined in the scramble for overleases were, as the **vakils** of Payoli district Munsiff's Court

15 G. W. Dance, Malabar Collector, to Sec., Revenue, 13 July 1899, MRP No 545, 19 August 1899, p 402.

16 Innes to Commissioner of Land Revenue and Forests, 26 August 1911, **loc cit,** p 24.

17 A. F. Pinhey, Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 2 April 1902, MJP No 806 (Conf.), 16 May 1902, pp 2-3, MRO. Para Nambi in fact appears to have survived these threats.

18 J. A. Thorne, Collector, Zamorin's Estate to Sec., to Commissioner, Court of Wards, **loc cit, p 14.**

19 Innes to Sec., Commissioner of Land Revenue and Forests, 26 August 1911, **loc cit,** p 24.

gravely observed in 1911, "generally middle class men possessed of ready money".[20] Thus in one part of south Malabar, the Parappanangadi area, in this period, a Nair advocate was able to become both rich and notorious by the expedient of receiving **melcharths** on the property of the Zamorin of Calicut.[21] Very often the Moplah tenant must have found that the investor who joined hands with the **jenmi** to oust him from his holding was the type of high-caste hindu of the professional class who was such an important force in the local Congress organisation.

At the same time, all tenants, whether having obtained their leases on **melcharth** or otherwise, shared a common antagonism to the typical **jenmi** who strove to exploit his advantages under the law to maximise the return from his lands at the tenants' expense. Even **vakil melcharthdars** were often strong advocates of legislation against the over-lease system "lest", as one journalist put it, "their **melcharths** be **re-melcharthed**"![22] Indeed, the clamour for curbing the proprietary rights of the **jenmi** in favour of the tenantry, which was raised in press and on platform in the earlier part of the century, was the forte of the monied investor in **kanam** property rather than the actual cultivator who was "least able to make himself heard by lawful means."[23]

Nevertheless, this interest which the Moplah tenantry, shared with the middle-class hindu **kanamdar** in the district Congress organisation could not be exploited to widen the social base of the national movement in Malabar as long as **jenmi** influence prevented the advocacy of tenant grievances by the annual district conference. At each of the three conferences which followed the first in 1916 the attempts of tenant spokesmen to advance in face of

20 To District Munsiff, Payoli, **ibid**, p 18.

21 Interview with M. Govindan Menon, Parappanangadi, 1 January 1975.

22 Article 'Melchart' by 'Agrarian', **West Coast Reformer**, 28 April 1915, MRP No 3021, 26 September 1917, p 3.

23 Innes, 'Strictly Confidential Note on the Malabar Tenancy Legislation', **loc cit**, p 53.

entrenched **jenmi** interest were effectually checked. One of the chief campaigners for tenancy reforms, K. P. Raman Menon of Calicut, commented at the 1920 conference that the tenancy question had not been aired at the four previous conferences on the pretext that such a contentious issue should not be taken up at a time when hopes of securing responsible government were high.[24] Disillusionment with the Malabar district conference as a means of furthering the cause of the tenant reached such a pitch that, after the 1917 session had once more shelved the issue, a proposal (which apparently proved abortive) for the creation of a rival organisation was mooted in the anti-**jenmi** press.[25]

In fact it was not until the fifth Malabar district conference at Manjeri in 1920 that this obstructionist policy of the **jenmi** interest was finally defeated and the tenant case first found a platform. Despite opposition on grounds of the interests of 'landlord-tenant unity', culminating in a strong protest sent up to the president by 21 of the **jenmis** present, a resolution in favour of tenancy reform was at long last adopted at a Malabar district conference. A motion of K. P. Raman Menon claiming that it was "high time to legislate safeguarding the interests of the tenants in Malabar" was put to the vote and carried amidst acclamation.[26] The defection of the greater part of the **jenmi** interest from the now-radicalised mainstream of the nationalist movement in Malabar was one consequence. The Ottapalam conference of 1921 was boycotted by most of the big Malayali landlords whose support was lent to a newly-formed local branch of the National (Liberal) Federation.[27] Moreover, almost immediately after the conference, in response to invitations sent out by K. P. Raman Menon, "a number of Vakils and tenants" met in

24 **Madras Mail**, 3 May 1920, p 6.

25 **West Coast Spectator**, 28 April 1917, MNNR January-June 1917, pp 1228-29.

26 **New India**, 4 May 1920, p 5.

27 **Ibid**, 29 January 1921, p 5.

Calicut to initiate the formation of a **Kudian Sangham** or Tenants' Association.[28]

It would seem likely that pre-conference exhortation to all interested in the tenancy question to be at Manjeri on 28 April 1920 for the start of the conference would have helped ensure the presence of the great numbers of Ernad Moplahs who formed such a high proportion of the delegates. In fact the growing 'mass' character of Congress in the 'Kerala' area at this time is disclosed both in the record attendance at Manjeri and the social character of very many of the delegates, described later as "the assembled Moplah peasants and coolies."[29] Even so, the successful attracting of representation from among the Ernad Moplahs cannot be ascribed solely to the polarisation between the landlord interest and that of the tenant which reached an advanced state at the fifth district conference.

The very choice for the venue of the conference of Manjeri in the heart of the 'fanatic zone' was an indication of the ambition of the Kerala Congress to extend its influence among the muslims of Ernad. It was considered a sign of the times when, in late 1919, at a public meeting in Manjeri at which a Reception Committee for the forthcoming conference was set up, two leading Ernad Moplahs were chosen. This seems to have been the first occasion on which leaders of the community had shown active interest in the political movement.[30] There can be no doubt that both the Congress initiative and the favourable response elicited owed much to the developing anti-British agitation throughout India known as the 'Khilafat' movement, which took as its focus allied proposals threatening the integrity of the territories of the Turkish Sultan and Caliph.

28 **Madras Mail**, 28 May 1920, p 6.
29 **Times of India**, 12 September 1921, p 11.
30 **Madras Mail**, 10 October 1919, p 3.

Part 2: The Moplahs and Turkey

It is not surprising that a community like the Ernad Moplahs, for which its religion had connotations of social and economic liberation, should have tended, with or without justification, to cast each challenge to British power during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Islamic terms. The crushing defeat which, in the early stages of the first world war, the 'fanatic zone' Moplahs believed was being administered to their rulers was inflicted by the army of a nation, Germany, which, it was suggested, had embraced Islam.[31] Apparently even the Boers in 1900 were to be led to victory against Britain by the intervention of the Sultan of Turkey.[32] The invincibility of the empire of this muslim ruler, especially in conflict with the "Christian Powers", seems to have been an important item of faith with the Moplahs. According to C. A. Innes, the district magistrate of Malabar in 1915:

> "the Mappillas in the lower strata of society...have the most absurdly exaggerated ideas of Turkey's prowess and now that Turkey has come in [into the War] I suspect that they think that Germany's final triumph is merely a matter of time."[33]

The fortunes of the Ernad Moplah were undoubtedly felt by him to be promoted by the exercise of power by the Islamic **raj** across the Arabian Sea. In 1922 the unconditional release of 500 Moplahs imprisoned for their participation in the 1921-22 rising and the withdrawal from the rebellion zone of the special police raised to deal with the revolt were both attributed to "pressure from the victorious Angoras".[34] Some seven years earlier the

31 Innes to P. Rajagopala Achariyar, Sec., Judicial Dept., Govt. of Madras, 13 January 1915, MJP No 360 (Conf.), 18 February 1915, pp 11 and 68, MRO.

32 Article 'The Mappilla's Powerful Imagination', **Times of Malabar**, 13 January 1900, MNNR 1899-1900, p 18.

33 Innes to P. Rajagopala Achariyar, 13 January 1915, **loc cit**, pp 66-67, MRO.

34 R. H. Ellis, Malabar Magistrate, to Chief Sec., 9 November

belief was current in Ernad that the victory of Turkey and their 'newly-Islamicised' German allies would mean for the Moplah freedom from the constraints of British rule, the obligation to meet rent and revenue demands in particular.[35] It would appear that the presence at the other end of the Indian Ocean shipping routes of the world's most powerful muslim empire[36] was felt by the Moplah to be of much importance in sustaining his hopes for the downfall of the British-imposed agrarian and administrative systems of high-caste hindu ascendancy. For the Ernad Moplah support for Turkey seems to have been important primarily in so far as such aid was felt to be a form of self-help. The solicitude of the "fanatic zone" Moplahs for the success of Turkish arms and the fate of the sultan's empire was therefore, in the course of the later phases of the "Eastern Question", most earnest and palpable when most directly linked to their own fortunes. In 1911-12 the Malayali press had commented on the "aggressive sympathy" for the Ottoman empire in its war with Italy shown by Moplahs in a number of places in Malabar.[37] However, a confidential report (prompted by the concern of the government of Madras) by the district magistrate on Moplah feeling revealed a picture at once more complex and more significant. C. A. Innes discovered that "the educated Mappillas and others" in centres in the "fanatic zone" area such as Malappuram, Perintalmanna, Mannarghat and Mambad were following the course of the war "with keen interest" with a 40-days prayer conducted continuously in Perintalmanna mosque, presumably for the success of Turkish arms. On the other hand in the "out-of-the-way **amsams** amongst the ignorant

1922, Govt. of Madras, Under Sec.'s Safe, Secret No 386, 15 December 1922, MRO.

35 Innes to P. Rajagopala Achariyar, 13 January 1915, **loc cit.** p 68, MRO.

36 Moplah contact with Arabia as pilgrims and traders was intimate and of long-standing.

37 **Cochin Argus**, 25 November 1911, MNNR 1911, p 1696.

Mappilla cultivators" of Ernad and Walluvanad, ie among the traditionally most fanatical muslims of Malabar, he was able to find "very little indication of much interest in the war". In fact the "fanatic zone" was found to be "to all outward appearances...particularly quiet" and the collector could not discover anywhere any manifestation of Moplah sympathy with the Turks which posed a danger to the interests of the British **Raj**.[38] For the rural Moplah of Ernad, Turkey's struggle in the eastern Mediterranean area in 1911-12 must have seemed remote from any possible resolution of his own long-standing discontents under British rule.

On the other hand, when, in late 1914, the empire of their 'invincible' Sultan entered the great war as Britain's adversary, the coveted day of deliverance must have seemed imminent. This would have especially been the case since the challenge to British rule took the irrefutable form of the sensational exploits of the German warship **Emden** which shelled Madras and operated off the Malabar coast, sinking ships in the area of the Laccadive Islands. The sense of anticipation among the "more ignorant" of the Malabar Moplahs was so strong that they were reported as being firmly convinced for more than a month before the event that Britain had been at war with Turkey but that the fact had been suppressed.[39] Not unnaturally, the concern of the government of Madras over the likely reaction of its muslim citizens to Turkey's entry into the war was most anxious in the case of the lower-order Moplahs of Malabar. In the event, British fears were not ill-founded. Rumours of the impending collapse of British power in face of the military prowess of Turkey and her allies and the imminent descent of the Sultan on India swept the 'Moplah **taluks**' in 1914-15. Such

38 Innes to Under Sec., 25 November 1912, MJP No 2040, 9 December 1912, pp 5-14, MRO.

39 Report for 11 November 1914, P 4918, one of the fortnightly reports on the internal situation in Madras Presidency, in 'The War: Moslem Feeling', file 4265/1914 Pt. 1, Political and Secret Files, L/P and S/10/518.

doomsday stories can only have been lent credence by the replacement in January 1915 of the regular troops which, since 1852, had been garrisoned at Malappuram to watch over the Ernad Moplah, by a reserve battalion composed entirely of recruits. This move, indeed, was only the first step in a progressive weakening of the British military presence in the "fanatic zone."[40] The serious disturbances which accompanied this period of unrest included **dacoities**, attempts by Moplahs to secure converts by illegitimate and coercive means, a 'fanatical' outbreak and general lawlessness among the Moplahs of the Ernad area.

In the event, the Moplah anticipation of impending British downfall was of course disappointed. After the first weeks of Turkish participation in the war the "Moplah **taluks**" presented a less disturbed appearance. Despite the fact that the 1915 outbreak had broken a 17-year period of relative peace in Ernad, the authorities in Madras were still complacent enough in 1917 to dismiss the pressure of ex-district magistrate Innes for legislation to protect the Malabar tenant with the reflection that the **jenmi's** adherence to the British interest outweighed any political gain to be registered by placating the tenant.[41] That Innes himself had been unable to detect any agrarian discontent in an outbreak which had been directed against an apostate and the infidel administration which protected him certainly would not have helped the case for tenancy legislation. Moreover, the fact that one outbreak had occurred after 17 years of freedom from such disturbances did not create the same intensity of pressure that had led to the 1887-1900 legislation. But despite sanguine British estimates after 1915 of the tractability of the Ernad Moplah, it is clear that his hopes that the end of British rule might not be too distant had not been extinguished by the final outcome of the great war. Even after the allied victory of 1918 the "fanatic zone" Moplah was said

40 'Notes on the withdrawal of troops from Malappuram', 12 October 1921, appendix 1, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **The Mappilla Rebellion, 1921-22**, pp 421-24. 41 See above p 22.

to believe that the war had irretrievably weakened the **Raj.**[42] The eventual complete withdrawal in the first half of 1921 of the troops garrisoned at Malappuram seemed to confirm an impression which, indeed, was by no means without basis in fact.[43]

From the earliest period of British rule in Malabar, officials in closest contact with the Moplahs of the "fanatic zone" had emphasised the necessity of impressing them with the invincibility of British rule. It was essential to show some "outward and visible sign" of the power of government[44] if its authority were to be maintained among a people for whom even the closing down of a handful of police stations was liable to be interpreted as "powerlessness to maintain law and order."[45] In fact throughout the entire period of British rule it had been a commonplace with British government servants in closest touch with the predispositions of the Moplah of the south Malabar interior that he was not to be permitted the slightest impression of British weakness if he were to be mastered. During the "Indian unrest" of the 1900s when policing re-arrangements were being framed to meet contingencies very like those which in fact faced the **Raj** in the immediate post-war period, those responsible for law and order in the Madras Presidency had stressed the importance of adequate military provision, the case of Malabar being specifically underlined.[46] Despite such cautioning, and in face of opposition from the Madras government, the immediate aftermath of the great war saw the removal of

42 **Kerala Kaumudi,** 8 September 1921, MNNR 1921, p 1112.

43 See details of British military weakness in the Madras Presidency given in G.O.C. to Govt. of Madras, 15 August 1921 (Secret), G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit,** p 30.

44 G. W. Dance; Malabar Collector to Sec. to Commissioners, Land Revenue, 13 December 1897, MRP No 136, 8 March 1898, p 94.

45 R. H. Hitchcock, Supt. of Police, South Malabar, 'Report on the Mappilla Outbreak of 1915', 30 March 1915, MJP Nos 2080-84, 3 September 1915 (Conf.), p 63.

46 W. O. Horne, Insp.-Gen. of Police, Madras to Chief Sec., 31 May 1905, MJP No 1452, 12 September 1905, p 80.

all troops from Malappuram and the subsequent public auctioning of the furniture and fittings of its barracks.

The inference drawn from such omens by the Ernad Moplah, that British power was expiring, was also an assumption on which the strategy of the Indian National Congress in the immediate post-War period was based. It was this concurrence which formed the basis of the association of the "Jungle Moplahs" with Malabar congressmen in the Khilafat movement of this period. For the latter the numerous muslim community of Ernad and Walluvanad,[47] observed by the district magistrate by 1920 to be "ready to overthrow the existing form of Government"[48] given a suitable opportunity,was clearly a useful ally in the struggle for **swaraj**. For the former, there was evidently some considerable understanding that the movement entailed alignment with Turkey for a challenge to British rule. However, comprehension of the meaning of the term 'Khilafat' was very often deficient.[49] Moreover for the "fanatic zone" muslims the idea that British rule was a menace to 'Islam' needed no introduction[50] and roused passion which could be quite independent of Turkey. The hostility to the **Raj** which was a sentiment shared by the Ernad Moplah and Congressman was merely formalised in the period 1920-21 as a movement for solidarity with Turkey.

Conclusion

In the first four years after its first impact as a political force of importance in Malabar, the local Indian National

47 The Moplah population of Ernad in 1921 was 235,873, that of Walluvanad, 131,497.

48 Govt. of Madras, **The Non-Cooperation Movements in the Madras Presidency**, p 38, MRO.

49 See demi-official report of F. B. Evans, Special Civil Officer at the time of the 1921 rebellion, 26 December 1921, G. R. F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit**, p 279. The present writer was still being told in 1974 by rebellion participants that 'Khilafat' meant "the expulsion of the British", "the organisation of Muslims", "independence", "something to do with my religion and my community", "that the white man should go". 50 See above pp 40, 106 and 116.

Congress was basically pro-**Jenmi** and, in its opposition to the ruling power, constitutionalist. It was therefore, on both counts, of little attraction in 1916-20 to the Ernad Moplah in his quest for the resolution of his traditional grievances. On the contrary the Malabar Congress must have appeared to him simply as a vehicle for the promotion of precisely those high-caste hindu interests with which he had for so long been in conflict. The capture of Congress in 1920, by elements which favoured not only curbing **jenmi** power but also the challenge to British rule in the name of the vindication of Islam which was then developing on an all-India scale, attracted the attention of the south Malabar rural Moplahs. At Manjeri they first participated in force in a Congress district conference. By 1920 the pacifying effects of the agrarian legislation of 1887-1900 had long worn off because of **jenmi** machination, and Moplah discontent had broken out in defiance of British rule with the outbreaks of 1915 and 1919. Prescriptively, these disorders, in the absence of anything more than a fleeting challenge to the British for power on a sub-continental scale, chiefly took the form of the ritual defiance of the outbreak—a defiance which left the Madras administration so unperturbed as to reject in 1917 any suggestion of the need for new and more radical agrarian reforms in Malabar. This decision was the guarantee that the response of the Ernad Moplah to the creation of the first great direct threat to British rule in India since 1857-58, the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement of 1920-21, would be most positive.. At the same time the political movement of 1920-21 was in Malabar in the hands of high-caste hindu elements which, whilst having their own reasons for opposition to landlord power and British rule, were also in antagonism with the Ernad Moplah in the realm of interest. It was this that ensured that the relationship of the "Jungle Moplah" with the non-cooperation movement would be of a nature far removed from that of reciprocity.

CHAPTER 4

The Ernad Moplah and the Political Movement in Malabar: The Organisation of the Challenge to British Rule and the Jenmi, 1920-21

Part 1 : The Khilafat-non-cooperation Movement

Opposition to government as well as to the power of the **jenmi** was the rationale for the juxtaposition of "fanatic zone" Moplah and the Malabar Congress from April 1920, when the 'extremists' assumed control of the local nationalist movement at the Manjeri conference, and the outbreak of rebellion in August 1921. However, the demonstrations of triumph with which the large Ernad Moplah contingent at Manjeri greeted the passing of the resolution calling for non-cooperation with government over the Khilafat issue by no means signified Moplah acceptance of the Gandhian tenets to which Congress subscribed. On the contrary, the extent to which the Kerala branch of the Indian National Congress was able to impose the shibboleths of non-cooperation, non-violence and hindu-muslim unity on the Ernad Moplah was minimal.

In fact there was limited contact between the organisers of the nationalist movement and the rural population of most of the "Moplah zone". This area, remote from the urban centres of political organisation such as Calicut, Palghat, Tellicherry and Cannanore, and with a population unlikely to make great financial contribution to the political movement, did not receive first priority from Congress agitators. In May 1920, soon after the Manjeri conference, it is known that at least one Ernad Moplah, Variankunnath Kunhamad Haji, later to become one of the leaders of the rebellion, had been appointed to collect subscriptions for the Khilafat movement. However, pres-

sure from the local authorities seems quickly to have suppressed this initial activity in the "fanatic zone". A drive in January-June 1921 to establish Congress organisations throughout Kerala produced only 365 members in Ernad compared with 2944 in the Palghat-Walluvanad area, 1047 in Calicut **taluk**, 975 in the Cochin area and 2798 in the coastal **taluk** of Ponnani.[1] In fact agitation was only resumed in the greater part of the "fanatic zone" during the three months, June to August 1921, which preceded the start of the insurrection. Although in this period, scores of Khilafat committees may well have been set up in the Moplah zone,[2] most seem to have been ephemeral. Commonly, itinerant organisers would visit a **desam** ('village'), hold a meeting in the local mosque, collect subscriptions, appoint Khilafat committee officials and pass on, hardly knowing who their new recruits were. Not surprisingly the organisational forms of the Khilafat movement took no firm root in most of the countryside of interior south Malabar. As R. H. Hitchcock, the superintendent of police in south Malabar, was later to complain, there was "nothing tangible to oppose".[3]

The chief, but partial, exception was the area around Tirur, Tanur, Kaipakancheri and Tirurangadi where Malabar's railway skirted the western margin of the "fanatic zone". In this more accessible region, Khilafat committees were set up as early as October-November 1920 and in February 1921 the activities of Khilafat organisers among its 'fanatical' Moplah inhabitants attracted the concern of the district magistrate. The contiguity of this section of the "Moplah zone" with the coastal centres of political activity also meant that participation in the large-scale confrontations, between government and the

1 **Madras Mail**, 19 September 1921, p 6.

2 Police Insp. M. Narayana Menon, whose jurisdiction lay in eastern Ernad, reported that before the rising there were 30-50 Khilafat organisations in his circle; **Madras Mail**, 17 December 1921, p 7.

3 Hitchcock, **A History of the Malabar Rebellion,1921,** p 20.

Khilafatists which occurred in the towns in the months preceding the rising was a possibility.[4] It was two or three hundred Ernad Moplahs from this area who, having come to Calicut in February 1921 on the occasion of the arrest of four Khilafat leaders, were the source of the most dangerous and frenzied of the convulsions with which the authorities were faced in the town at that time. In July 1921 it was, again, Moplahs from western Ernad who, when anti-Khilafat Moplahs in Ponnani town were conducting public activity, largely created the greatest threat to law and order when the police protecting the pro-government party were rushed by the Khilafatists.[5]

But although such relatively close contact with the organising centres of the non-cooperation movement was a characteristic of that section of it in the Tirurangadi area, even here Khilafat Moplahs were not constrained by the new Congress ideology. Throughout interior south Malabar nationalist agitators discovered that the Moplah received the message of non-violent non-cooperation without enthusiasm or conviction. Indeed, in their anxiety to allay suspicion of them as representatives of the social orders which had traditionally attracted Moplah hostility, the hindu professional men who were primarily responsible for the attempt to organise the "fanatic zone" found it necessary to prove themselves accommodating to Moplah predilections. The assertion of police superintendent Hitchcock that the non-violent part of Gandhi's programme was played down[6] is by no means incredible, the more especially since many Congressmen accepted non-violence merely as a tactic not as a philosophy. It was the claim of Home Rule leader Manjeri Ramaier that, at the 1920 Manjeri Conference, he was in receipt of a Malayalam leaflet distributed on the occasion by the non-cooperation party and containing no word about non-violence in its

4 Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 17 February 1921, MPP No. 103, 25 February 1921, p 4.

5 **Madras Mail**, 8 October 1921, p 7.

6 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 26.

fulminations against British policy towards the Khilafat.[7] Moreover, it is incontestable that prominence was given to the alleged British antagonism to the community of Islam. As the government of India observed in June 1921 of the Khilafat movement in Malabar, it had "assumed (a) defiantly religious aspect somewhat to (the) detriment of Gandhi propaganda."[8]

Testifying to the necessity felt in the 1920-21 Malabar nationalist movement for conforming to the traditional disposition of the "fanatic zone" Moplah was the resort to the recruitment of Moplah **ulema** as instruments for the organisation of the Khilafat agitation in Ernad. It is true that Moplah divines, especially the more exalted outside interior south Malabar, were prominent in the government-backed campaign of opposition to the Khilafatists in the district. In Ernad, however, it was the less notable **Mussaliars** who came to be the chief agency for conducting the Khilafat agitation. Of the ten 'agitators' on police superintendent Hitchcock's list of the 18 most dangerous men to be arrested during the government raid on Tirurangadi of 20 August 1921 (the measure which precipitated the outbreak of the rebellion[9]), no less than eight were **Mussaliars** and one a **Tangal.**[10] One of these divines in particular, Kattillasseri Muhammad Mussaliar of Walluvanad, had spent the few weeks immediately preceding the rising with a **vakil**, Muthal Puredath Narayana Menon, the secretary of the Ernad Congress Committee, on an organising tour of eastern Ernad where a number of rather precarious Khilafat 'organisations' were set up at this time. The lower **ulema** of the "fanatic

7 Manjeri Ramaier, 'Khilafat Explosion in Malabar', extract from **New India**, 6 October 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed), **loc cit**, p 3.

8 Viceroy, Home Dept. to Sec. of State (tel.), 1 June 1921, L/MIL/5/838, M/5395/1921. See also C.F. Andrews, 'Malabar Tragedy', **New India**, 21 January 1922, p 5.

9 See below p 164.

10 Official report of Hitchcock, 16 August 1921, Hitchcock, **loc cit**, pp 31-32.

zone" were responsive to the appeal of organisation in the name of Islam and diffused across the face of the south Malabar countryside, from whose muslim inhabitants they were entitled to a degree of veneration. They must therefore have seemed suitable agents for a largely middle-class high-caste hindu political movement able to close the gulf separating them from the Ernad Moplah only by compromise on their own part.

This is not to argue that the organisation of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement in the western marginal areas of the "fanatic zone" exhibited none of the features characteristic of the campaign in the rest of India. Thus, western Ernad experienced the sporting of Khilafat flags and other badges of allegiance, the distribution of a 'Khilafat' currency, the constituting of a few volunteer corps[11] and 'Khilafat courts', as well as attempts to vest Khilafat Committees with magisterial authority. However, it is significant that these generally novel expressions of Moplah political activity, entailing the creation of organs as well as symbols of authority, were entirely compatible with the tradition of militant challenge to British rule traceable as a recurrent theme in the history of the "fanatic zone" back to the eighteenth century.

On the other hand, the tendency of certain leaders of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement to attempt to regulate mass participation by confining it to the more innocuous forms of activity, under the plea of the need for time to perfect the necessary organisational forms,[12]

11 These corps, especially that at Tirurangadi, gave some anxiety to the district authorities in June 1921, but a few weeks later they were satisfied that these bodies had waned to insignificance. Extracts from fortnightly reports, Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed), **loc cit**, p 6.

12 See, for example, account of speech of K. P. Kesava Menon, to a Khilafat-non-cooperation demonstration at Kaipakancheri, 22 March 1921, in 'The Moplah Rebellion, III', **Madras Mail**, 10 November 1921, p 8.

won little positive response from the Ernad Moplah. As Hitchcock observed:

> "A speech in Calicut would rouse the local Mappilla audience to such a pitch that they would offer their clothes to be burnt: the same speech in Ernad would send the audience away quietly to the making of swords."[13]

Indeed, the non-cooperation side of the nationalist agitation of 1920-21 was found to have so little appeal to the Moplah of interior south Malabar that it came largely to be ignored at meetings even by hindu activists. It is true that in a few parts of the "fanatic zone", such as Tirurangadi, the Ernad Moplah did participate in such forms of activity as the boycotting of 'respectable' Moplahs opposed to the Khilafat agitation and the picketing of toddy shops[14] which were favoured in the rest of Malabar. But even these imported political forms were assimilated to venerable Moplah usage. Far from being conducted peacefully, these activities were, in Ernad, characterised by the violence traditionally employed by the "fanatic zone" Moplah against those who failed to conform to his anti-establishment persuasions. Thus, the months preceding the rebellion saw a high proportion of the assaults by Moplahs on anti-Khilafatists which were committed in Malabar concentrated in the Tirurangadi region. In the same general area, at the beginning of August 1921, the mode of conducting the anti-drink campaign took the form of violent attack on Tien toddy-tappers at Tanalur.[15]

But the Khilafat movement in the "fanatic zone" also conformed to Moplah tradition in a sense other than the use of violence. Organisation for social and political ends via the community of religion, for decades the most effi-

13 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 178.

14 The anti-drink side of the non-cooperation movement coincided with Moplah religious sentiment and was taken up with some gusto. With the outbreak of rebellion in August 1921 toddy shops became a target of the Moplah rebels.

15 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 27.

cient resort of the unaided Ernad Moplah and now pandered to through the Khilafat movement, was a striking feature of the months preceding the insurrection. The most spectacular indication of this kind of mobilisation was the practice of the Khilafat 'volunteers' of Tirurangadi, from June 1921, of proceeding **en masse**, under the leadership of local Khilafat secretary Erikunnan Ali Mussaliar, to pray at the spot in the town where certain **shahid** were reputed to be interred and thereby devote themselves to the cause of 'Islam' by resistance to the authorities.[16] Of rather more obvious practical use than this form of invocation, however, was the means adopted by the local-level **Mussaliar** leadership for the organisation of the Moplahs of the Feroke area of Ernad for support of the Khilafat campaign before the rebellion. This was apparently the nightly performance of songs descriptive of the deeds of past **shahid**,[17] the chanting of which had been of such importance in the traditional methods of mobilisation in the south Malabar interior.[18] Of further utility was the exploitation of the traditional Moplah votive rite, the **nercha**. The oblatory aspect of the **nercha** in the period of the Moplah outbreak seems frequently to have been the form in which the mutual dependence of **shahid** (or at least the group sustaining them) and **Tangal** was transacted.[19] For a form of action like the outbreak the trading of votive offering for religious sanction was appropriate. As a means of securing funds for anti-government purposes, a principal function it performed for the Khilafat party, the **nercha** was a mere convenience. Finance for the movement might be, and to an extent was, secured without ceremonial by the functional method of collecting four anna subscriptions from Khilafat 'members'.[20] Even

16 Official report of Hitchcock, 16 August 1921, **ibid**, p 31.

17 **Madras Mail**, 26 September 1921, p 5.

18 See above pp 25 and 59.

19 See above p 46.

20 However, it seems that even the collection of these subscriptions was sometimes made by **Mussaliars in mosques.**

so, the ready adaptation of the **nercha** (by the locally-recruited cadre, but with the apparent acquiescence of the higher leadership) to the purposes of the Khilafat campaign was an indication of the disposition of the movement's leaders to seek support in religion for a challenge for political power. Little wonder the progression of the Moplah challenge to government from the formal to the material was not accompanied by the discarding of rite when nationalist movement itself considered it expedient to give its secular aims a religious form.

Yet, in one respect at least, political mobilisation by means of religion was less obviously dispensable. Moplah use of mosques for the purpose of combination had always had a more strictly secular component in that, as rare community buildings in the countryside, they provided convenient facilities for assembly for intending **shahid**.[21] During the period of the Khilafat agitation, as well as in the course of the rebellion, such exploitation of the mosque was, on occasions, extended further than the parochial field in which it had operated previously. The sense, which developed during the agitation in the south Malabar interior, of common participation in a widespread movement seems to have elicited organisational innovation from the "fanatic zone" Moplah. Thus, the inaccessibilities of the Malabar countryside were to some extent overcome by the development of a system of drumbeating communicated via the close network of mosques spread across the face of the land. It is also likely that the increase during the early twentieth century in the number of **shandies** (markets) in the interior of south Malabar, a measure pressed for by officialdom since the 1890s to promote the economic development of Ernad, would have meant the strengthening of the only solely secular way in which the isolation of the rural Ernad Moplah was mitigated.[22] Certainly the market place provided some facility to hindus during the Khilafat agita-

21 See above p 41.
22 See above p 42.

tion in making contact with Moplahs whose energies they hoped to exploit. Moreover, the coincidence of the Government raid on Tirurangadi on 20 August 1921 with **shandy** days in certain settlements in the vicinity meant that Moplah mobs were virtually ready made for the events with which the insurrection began.[23] Thus, Kottakkal, where **shandy** day fell on the 20th contributed largely to the Moplah multitudes which attacked the government force at Tirurangadi eight or nine miles away the same day.[24] Most significantly, although news of the events at Tirurangadi reached Tirur on the afternoon of the 20th, it was not until the following morning, **shandy** day, that crowds of Moplahs began to collect.[25]

Nevertheless purely secular means of mobilisation were wanting in at least one respect The preservation inviolate of their place of religious resort was enshrined as a sacred duty for Moplahs in the corpus of tradition surrounding the story of the defence in 1734 of Malappuram mosque by 44 Moplah heroes against the forces of a local hindu chieftain, an event commemorated in that climax of the Ernad calendar, the Malappuram **nercha**.[26] Nor was the injunction to defend the mosque ignored. Throughout the modern period of Moplah contumacy, rumour of threat to the mosque was almost certain to elicit violent reaction. Under these circumstances even access or approach to the **palli** (mosque) could be narrowly restricted by the intense jealousy of the Moplah. Significantly this extreme sensitivity of Moplahs to any threat of violation of their mosques did not also entail an aversion to the exploitation of these buildings for profane purposes by members of their own community. There appears to be no record of

23 For details of this raid see below p 164.

24 Hitchcock, **loc cit, p.** 38.

25 Judgement, Case No. 74 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Malabar, 24 May 1922, **ibid,** pp 211 and 215.

26 The only detailed account of the origin of this **nercha** appears to be in V. J. Ryder, **Two Years in Malabar.** Ryder obtained his information from the Malappuram **adhigari,** a Moplah, who in turn relied on records preserved in the Malappuram mosque.

disapproval (except, significantly, by pro-government Moplahs.[27]) of the undoubted use by Moplahs of the mosque as lodging-house, assembly-and debating-hall, store-room, fortress and cache or asylum for felons. The security expected from the house of god in all these applications was clearly not merely a matter of four walls. If interpretation of the affairs of religion in terms of the spiritual alone is received opinion, the profane use of the zealously guarded Moplah **palli** is true paradox. The sanctity of the mosque was of the most decided advantage to Moplahs in the pursuit of temporal objectives, notably those vulnerable to the intrusion of parties not sharing the collective interests of the community. Accordingly, it seems significant that, whilst groups of Moplahs like the followers of the Kondotti Tangal and anti-Khilafatists were liable to find themselves subject to attempts to exclude them from use of the **palli,** the prohibitions on mosque entry could be relaxed in the case of Nairs purporting to be allies in the challenge to the **Raj.**[28] In the case of the Kondotti people, it would appear that their exclusion from Kizhuparamba mosque was linked by a preacher of the rival faction to the assistance rendered to government by the former sect in the suppression of outbreaks, for which Kondotti Tangal had been periodically rewarded.[29] Certainly the 'Ponnani' Moplahs had something to fear from the presence of a loyalist fifth column in their inner sanctum, especially when it is known that Kondotti Moplahs were a source of useful information to the authorities on the intrigues of their rivals.

27 Translation of the notice appealing Moplahs to be loyal to the Crown and pointing to the "sins... consequent to the use of mosques...like houses" published on 11 October 1921 by P. M. Valiya Seethi Koya Thangal, D. W. No. 4, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, Case No. 162 of 1922, Referred Trial No 22 of 1923, 40, MHCA.

28 Hitchcock, **loc cit,** p 24.

29 Petition of two Kondotti Moplahs, 12 July 1984, MJP Nos 1169-74, 2 May 1885, p 10.

In the "Khilafat period" the value of the sanctified seclusion of the mosque as a shield against the possible retribution of the powerful is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the riot case in Kizhakkot **amsom**, Calicut **taluk**, in March 1921. On 30 March a Khilafat meeting held in a field by the local Moplahs, with a **Mussaliar** from Ernad as speaker, had been poorly attended because of the influence of the foremost **jenmi** of the area, a **Nair** aristocrat. Instructively, the decision to try again the next day involved the re-location of the meeting, because of fear of opposition, at a local mosque. In fact local hindus had the temerity to intrude irreverently into the proceedings, with the predictable consequence of a frenzied Moplah response which left eight hindu casualties and the **jenmi**'s property damaged and defiled.[30]

It seems clear that the notoriety of the apparently uncontrollable enthusiasm of the Moplah for his mosque might work with much more cautionary effect than in the Kizhakkot case. During the outbreak period desperate advice that certain mosques should be closed or even razed, given by Malabar officials with the most authentic experience of the use the **palli** was put to by the 'fanatical' Moplah population of Ernad, was rejected, often with rebukes, by their superiors.[31] Later, in the course of the Khilafat agitation, similar prudence on the part of the government enabled agitators to evade the imposition of restrictions on the right of assembly and to continue inciting defiance of the **Raj** through the exploitation of the mosque as a meeting place. Most strikingly of all, the zeal which brought thousands of muslims "shivering not with fear but with religious fervour", to Pukkotur in Ernad on 1 August 1921,[32] and which was formalised in the call for a hindu **jenmi**'s mansion to be converted into a mosque, resulted in the authorities shrinking from confrontation and their surrendering control of the area to

30 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 25.
31 See above p 117.
32 See below p 160.

the Moplahs for a period of three weeks.[33] The grave setback for government which the "Pukkotur incident", represented would have seemed, to any Moplah capable of reflecting on it, a vindication of political mobilisation through religion. The problem with which the Ernad Moplah had struggled for decades, the expansion of **jenmi** power under the auspices of British rule, had been brought to the point of a most consummate solution, one to which the long history of Moplah recalcitrance pointed. With consciousness of the fact apparently not wanting, the Moplah had, for a short space and a limited area, won **swaraj**.

Nevertheless, the Congress sponsors of the Khilafat movement were by no means exultant at this notable victory achieved by the Ernad Moplah. Anxious to establish that the Moplah of the "fanatic zone" was (somewhat miraculously, considering the pliant character of the agitation in Ernad) a convert to the principles of non-violence and hindu-muslim fraternity, the leaders of the Kerala Congress cannot have welcomed incidents like those at Kizhakkot and Pukkotur, suggestive as they were that the Moplah of the south Malabar interior had not been won from his old ways. In fact, throughout the Khilafat campaign of 1920-21, the course the agitation in Ernad had taken was, to a very marked degree, autonomous of the Congress leadership. At Kizhakkot the hindu who first instituted the campaign (but whose connections with Congress are unknown) was soon thrust aside by the Moplahs. When the political activity, in the form of an open-air meeting initiated by this junior member of a Nair petty official's **tarwad** (joint family), gave way to assembly in a mosque and the calling in of outside Moplahs, the role of the Nair came to an end. In the case of the Pukkotur incident it was the Moplah secretary of the local Khilafat organisation Vadakke Vitti Mammad,

33 Demi-official notes of Malabar District Magistrate, 7 August 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed). **loc cit**, p 23.

whose conflict with his hindu **jenmi** and ex-employer, the Sixth Nilambur Tirumulpad, precipitated the disturbance. But though they later played diverse parts in the subsequent rebellion, Moplah Khilafat officials of the locality like Vadakke Vittil Mammad, Karat Moideen Kutti Haji and Malappuram Kunhi Tangal, rather less obdurate than the mass of their 'followers', showed themselves able to exercise over them only the most modest control. The Congress leadership in Calicut was completely dissociated from the incident at Pukkotur until some two or three weeks afterwards. Then, following a visit to the Malabar capital by Vadakke Vittil Mammad, a Nair emissary, after a most cursory visit to the vicinity, reported reassuringly (but doubtless with little confidence) to his headquarters.[34] In fact, what is known of the rudimentary regime which began to emerge at Pukkotur from the end of July and the beginning of August 1921 indicates a state of affairs little governed by the dictates of Congress politics. In a virtual act of secession from the British **Raj** the Pukkotur Moplahs intercepted communications with the outside world, against the intervention of which a degree of both armed and agitational preparation appears to have been made. Within their small and embryonic domain the new-found freedom from the dictates of foreign rule was employed in a fashion wholly consonant with traditional Moplah aspiration, and propertied hindus, where not put to flight, were liable to arbitrary exactions for purposes which, in one case, included the celebration of a **maulhud**.[35] The emergent **swaraj** at Pukkotur was clearly Moplah **raj**.

Part 2: The Tenancy Movement

The opportunist Congress attitude to the mobilisation of anti-government feeling over the Turkish question only subserved the Moplah practice of organising through the agency of religion. But what of that second great

34 Hitchcock, **loc cit, p 51.**

35 **Madras Mail,** 8 August 1921, p 6, 15 August 1921, p 7 and 7 September 1921, p 5.

concurrence of interest between the 'extremist' leaders of the Malabar Congress of 1920-21 and the rural Moplah—anti-**jenmi** sentiment? The struggle for change in the agrarian system of Malabar was a subject which, as the government of Madras noted in 1921, affected "the more impressionable portion" of the Malabar population "very deeply".[36] On this issue there could surely be no possibility of aberration on the part of the "political classes" of the urban areas from providing the means for mobilisation on a secular basis, the great desideratum of Moplah rural organisation?

In fact, in 1921 it was reported by the court of wards collector of the Zamorin's estate that "mass meetings of estate tenants among the Mappillas at different centres in Ernad **taluk** had been organised and held by non-co-operators from October 1920".[37] Such mass assemblies of rural Moplahs must have been the "Kudian [tenant] Conferences" held in the Malappuram area of Ernad in **amsoms** like Pukkotur, Kodur, Ponmala, Kuruva and Kottakal and described by K. Madhavan Nayar, a leading non-cooperator of the time. In September 1920 Madhavan Nayar himself participated in one such meeting at which not less than 5000 Moplahs and a number of hindus were said to be present.[38] The organisation which was at first, doubtless, responsible for this activity was the tenants' association which had been formed in May 1920 through the initiative of K. P. Raman Menon.[39] But despite the advocacy by leading elements in this association of the demand for tenancy legislation from the Madras government, the main body of activists in the organisation would in fact appear to have been non-cooperators. Throughout the period of the domination of the Malabar Congress by

36 Extracts from fortnightly reports to Govt. of India from Govt. of Madras, 2 February 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed), **loc cit**, p 9.

37 Administration report for Zamorin's Estate for 1920-21, 10 October 1921, MCWP No. 44, 16 November 1921, p 8.

38 K. Madhavan Nayar, **Malabar Kalapam**, pp 88-90.

39 See above p 132.

non-cooperators in 1920-21, relations with the tenants' association were close. The formation of the association was one of the outcomes of the 1920 district conference at Manjeri at which the 'extremist' element had first shown itself to be in control of the local Congress organisation. In turn, the holding of a tenants' conference as part of the first Kerala provincial conference at Ottapalam in 1921 seems to have been the result of an initiative by the tenants' association. This body, supplying the president (K. P. Raman Menon) at Ottapalam, received the support of the conference for an extension of tenants' associations throughout Kerala province.[40] With such reciprocration between the non-cooperation movement and the tenants' association it is not surprising to discover the majority support which existed in the latter for the tactic of non-cooperation. Thus, at the beginning of 1921 a meeting of the association resolved, in face of the opposition of those favouring a campaign for tenancy legislation, on the organisation of tenant non-cooperation with **jenmis** who evicted.[41] This victory for those in the tenants' movement favouring non-cooperation with landlords was repeated at Ottapalam despite resistance from not only those favouring legislation but also the minority **jenmi** element there.

Details of the extent to which these resolutions were translated into practice are meagre. The claim of the government of Madras was that in Malabar "in the neighbourhood of unpopular janmi...the pure doctrine of non-cooperation was reinforced by anti-jenmi agitation."[42] Certainly the assertion in February 1921 of one Malabar newspaper that "stories of boycott, of meetings and memorials" were coming from the interior[43] receives some confirmation from a contemporary report that a Nambu-

40 **Madras Mail,** 20 January 1921, p 5 and 27 April 1921, p 8.
41 **Ibid,** 20 January 1921, p 5.
42 Govt. of Madras, **The Non-Co-operation Movements in the Madras Presidency,** p 38, MRO.
43 **Mitavadi,** 28 February 1921, MNNR 1921, p 300.

diri jenmi of Kuruva in Walluvanad had complained to the authorities that he was being "boycotted and molested" by local Moplahs in pursuance of non-cooperation propaganda.[44] Moreover, in reporting on the effects of the work of non-cooperators in his domain, the court of wards collector of the Zamorin's estate observed that to notorious opponents of **jenmi** demands like his Ernad Moplah **verumpattomdars** (simple tenants), "the teachings of non-cooperation were wholesome food". Activities like the administering of the oath of non-cooperation against the estate and meetings calling for the withholding of rent due to the Zamorin had encouraged the traditional defiance of their **jenmi** by the Moplah tenantry. As a result, on the Guruvayur Devaswom sub-section of the estate, the agitation had resulted in the Moplahs combining to prevent offers for the plot of an evicted co-religionist.[45]

Thus, there is sufficient evidence to be able to say that the agitation of 1920-21 **did** to some extent succeed in mobilising at least some Ernad Moplahs on a secular basis against **jenmi** power. Even so, the strength of the non-cooperation effort on the tenancy issue in the south Malabar interior must, in the absence of adequate information, be of uncertain estimation. This is especially the case since a large proportion of the evidence of the tenancy activity of non-cooperators among the Ernad Moplahs relates to the estate of the Zamorin of Calicut. Since this estate was under the management of the court of wards in 1920-21 it was clearly an object of particular hostility to the anti-government movement. Moreover, the memoirs of one of the chief participants in the Congress tenancy agitation of 1920 make it clear that a failure to undertake basic organisational work characterised the leadership of the movement.[46]

44 **Madras Mail**, 14 February 1921, p 7.

45 Administration report for Zamorin's Estate for 1920-21, 10 October 1921, MCWP No 44, 16 November 1921, pp 2 and 9.

46 K. Madhavan Nayar, **Malabar Kalapam**, p 90.

Nevertheless, it may be said with certainty that, whatever was the degree of penetration among the rural Moplah population of Ernad of the tenancy movement associated with the Congress leadership, it was not sufficient to win that population from its attachment to communal methods of mobilisation. Clearly it would be surprising to discover that a few months of campaigning of doubtful intensity had displaced a rooted tradition of many decades. Moreover, despite a number of victories of a degree for which varying claims have been made,[47] the tenancy movement of 1920-21 evidently presented no credible alternative to that tradition. The action of the Malabar authorities in periodically prohibiting both tenancy and political meetings of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement as likely to inflame the feelings of the "more ignorant" Moplah towards both hindu **jenmi** and government,[48] tended to drive the Moplah back to his traditional recourse to the mosque as a meeting place immune from the interference of his enemies. Above all, the acid test of the value of secular, as opposed to communal, means of challenging the agrarian system in Malabar was necessarily the readiness of tenants regardless of religion to make common cause against **jenmi** power and the government responsible for inflating it.

Of course, the tenants' association itself was largely the outcome of initiative from the Nair professional man with substantial **kanam** interests in the land. Even so (and as the course of the rebellion was to demonstrate) the Moplah cultivator's experience of the scramble for **melcharths** over his holdings which had been led precisely by this element in the 1900s and 1910s must have confirmed his traditional suspicion that all hindus were appendages of the **jenmi**.

It is true that large numbers of the hindu tenantry

47 Administration report for Zamorin's Estate for 1920-21, **loc cit**, p 9; K. Madhavan Nayar, **loc cit**, p 88.

48 **Madras Mail**, 8 February 1921, p 9 and 14 February 1921, p 7.

outside the ranks of the kanamdar intermediaries of the professional classes had been drawn into the tenancy agitation of 1920-21. However, it is clear that this was on a very different basis from that of the poorer "fanatic zone" Moplah for whom the experience of decades held out little hope of casting government in the role of champion. For a substantial section of the tenant interest, without the same history of collision with the authorities, a strategy of reliance on government action to reform the agrarian system to the advantage of the cultivator seemed most promising. Without eschewing agitation and never slow to point to the advances of 'extremism' in vindication of its plea for tenancy legislation. this section of the agrarian movement nevertheless declared itself inimical to non-cooperation. To a considerable extent this was a Nair-backed movement with part of this community, especially through the Nair-controlled newspapers **Kerala Patrika** and **Kerala Sanchari,** playing an important cadre role. On the other hand, it is clear that much of the vigour of this agitation was supplied by the leadership of the far more disadvantaged castes ranking below the Nair in the Malabar social hierarchy, and in particular the Tiers. Prominent in the agitation for tenancy legislation was **Mitavadi,** the chief organ of the Malabar Tiers, and **Margadasi** which advocated the cause of the "depressed classes" in general. It was at this caste level in Kerala, far more than that of the Nair,[49] that the antagonism to the high castes dominating the nationalist movement, which sustained the non-brahmin movement on the east coast, manifested itself in professions of loyalty to the British connection. A campaign for change in the agrarian system of Malabar which professed to see in the Union

49 As Eugene F. Irschick, **Politics and Social Conflict in South India,** p 176 seems to argue. In Malabar it was the Nair, not the Malayali Brahmin (the Nambudiri), who tended to dominate the professions, engross public office and pioneer in English education. This is not to say that the Nair might not find anti-brahminism to his taste in certain spheres, such as social reform, however.

Jack "a symbol of justice and Protection"[50] was not well qualified to be an ally of the "fanatic zone" Moplah with his long history of repression at the hands of the **Raj**. Indeed, in the contest between the Ernad Moplah and the **Raj** during 1920-21 the Tien was frequently ranged, if not unambiguously, on the side of the latter, at least against the former.

With such tensions and mistrust tearing the tenant body, especially along caste lines, the successful inter-communal cooperation preconditional to any Moplah renunciation of the traditional modes of defiance practised in Ernad was inconceivable. The absence of solidarity across the divisions of community was revealed when, during 1920-21, the court of wards administration of the Guruvayur Devaswom estate was able to influence a hindu tenant to accept the lease of a Moplah's plot decreed for surrender, for which the Ernad Moplahs of the locality had combined to forestall the making of offers.[51] Indeed the weakness of the tenancy agitation of 1920-21 was such that it failed to make an impact on the government of Madras sufficient to compel even public acknowledgement that the question of agrarian reforms for Malabar was under consideration.[52] By its manifest shortcomings as an alternative means to communal organisation, the tenancy movement of the pre-rebellion period must have done little to wean the "fanatic zone" Moplah from its old ways. This was shown by the way in which, in the course of the first half of 1921, the 'Khilafat' issue drew the attention of the

50 **Madras Mail**, 6 July 1921, p 5. This was evidently a mass meeting of Tien tenants in Kottayam taluk.

51 Administration Report for Guruvayur Devaswom Estate for 1920-21, 11 October 1921, MCWP No 44, 16 November 1921, p 2.

52 In fact the government was considering the question. Apparently as a result of a tenants' deputation to the governor in late 1920, the government of Madras had, at the start of 1921, set on foot one of its periodic investigations into the subject (Lord Willingdon, governor of Madras to Lord Reading, viceroy, 3 June 1922, private, **Reading Papers**, Vol 24, p 328).

Ernad Moplah increasingly away from the tenancy movement. It was also demonstrated in the most remarkable fashion by what proved to be the climax of the agitation of 1920-21 in the Moplah **taluks**, the incident at Pukkotur in Ernad at the beginning of August 1921.

Part 3: The Approach to Rebellion

On this occasion hostility to the great **jenmi** of the area, the Sixth Nilambur Tirumulpad, was promoted by his handling of his economic relationship with his mainly Moplah tenants. However, despite the fact that a tenants' organisation had been formed in association with the Khilafat movement at the beginning of the year, Moplah resistance moved along customary 'fanatical' lines with mobs assembling in **niskarapalli** (praying 'sheds') then advancing on the Tirumulpad's **kovilagom** (palace) to demand its conversion to a mosque, and the head of its principal inmate, indeed of "all kafirs."[53] In similar traditional vein was the inexorable progression towards confrontation with the **Raj**, the long-standing alliance of which with the **jenmi** was in this instance demonstrated symbolically in the cooperation of a member of the Tirumulpad's family with the local police chief in the attempt to quell the Moplah insubordination.

But whilst the prosecution of economic objectives by means of religious frenzy was time-honoured Moplah technique, the incident at Pukkotur in August 1921 also illustrated the one great change the Khilafat movement had helped to bring about—the progression of the challenge to authority from the ritual limits of an earlier period to one more threatening to the established power. Justice Wigram's assurance in 1880[54] of safety from serious Moplah challenge to British dominion in the absence of leaders and organisation and with Moplah conscious-

53 Official report of Hitchcock, 8 August 1921, Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 28.

54 See above p 98.

ness of weakness **vis-a-vis** the **Raj**, was, forty years later, to be demonstrated as no longer well-founded. It is true that, because of the need to overcome the Ernad Moplah's suspicion of them as representatives of antagonistic social strata, the **vakil** non-cooperation leadership had found it necessary to recruit for the local leadership of the Khilafat movement those, the "fanatic zone" **ulema**, whose capacity for leadership represented no advance on what was traditional among the Ernad Moplah. It is true that, for the same opportunistic reasons, as well as because of the pressure of the authorities, secular modes of organisation of the "fanatic zone" were, even in western Ernad, overshadowed by those more traditional to the muslim population of the area. Even so, the 1800-02 rebellion had demonstrated that the Ernad Moplah was quite capable of insurrection given only internally supplied leadership and organisation. The one essential provided by the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement to enable the Moplah community to mount the ultimate challenge to British rule was a belief in the possibility of victory. There can no doubt that the activity of the political movement during 1920-21 had greatly encouraged the developing Moplah notion[55] that British authority was about to collapse. In parts of Ernad the Moplah had sometimes had direct experience of the few volunteer corps and 'Khilafat courts' which had been set up (as had indeed the Khilafat committees themselves) as intended substitutes for British power structures. Of wider impact would have been the constant circulation of Khilafat-non-cooperation propaganda that foreign rule in India was soon to end. This must certainly have been the impression conveyed by the speeches in April 1921 by Muhammad Ali at Madras and Erode and by the proceedings of the July Karachi Khilafat conference. The message that victory over the British would soon be achieved was spread throughout the "fanatic zone" via Malayalam pamphlets (the contents of which were read out in mos-

55 See above p 139.

ques)[56], the occasional public assembly and, in the case of the Erode meetings, by Moplah **Mussaliars** who attended.

Accordingly, the estimation on the eve of rebellion of the government of Madras that "continual provocative speeches on the Khilafat question, combined with the resolutions of the recent All-India Khilafat Conference at Karachi (had) produced an impression on the mind of the Mapilla that the end of the British Raj (was) at hand" seems judicious. What is even more significant however is the further observation that it was "certainly true that, as a result of Khilafat propaganda, the Mappillas (were)...better informed as to the strength of their own position and the difficulty of taking military action against them."[57] It is clear that the Moplah's assessment of the change in the balance of forces to Britain's disadvantage, though exaggerated, was by no means without foundation.

Thus, when the Pukkotur Moplah's antagonism towards the Sixth Nilambur Tirumulpad reached crisis point on 1 August 1921, the crowds which gathered for what was to be the final confrontation with the **jenmi** did not, as on the occasion of a number of 'outbreaks' in the past, come principally as spectators of the courting of retribution by a handful of desperate 'fanatics'. Many hundreds strong, and summoned from the greater part of the "fanatic zone" by the tattoo system the Moplahs found effective, they came with improvised weapons for the heads of the **jenmi** and of government officers ranking from deputy police superintendent Amu downwards, in general anticipation of contest with the authorities. When the latter, in face of such a massive display of opposition, in effect relinquished their sovereignty over the Pukkotur area for the following three weeks, the victory which Moplahs over a wide area of Ernad considered to have been obtained over the govern-

56 **Hindu** (weekly), 23 June 1921, p 10

57 Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, 17 August 1921, quoted in speech of Sir W. Vincent to Council of State, 5 September 1921, **Council of State Debates**, Vol II, 2nd Session, 1921, p 92.

ment must have enormously strengthened the conviction that the end of the **Raj** was close at hand. One educated Moplah alive at the time told the present writer in 1974: "We had the impression that the police had been defeated at Pukkotur...that the police had no power and that if we exerted ourselves we could win."[58]

The Pukkotur incident was immediately followed on 3 August 1921 by a second challenge to authority at Tanalur near the western fringe of the "fanatic zone". A large crowd of Moplahs assembled with arms to prevent, with striking successes, the arrest of a number of co-religionists who had assaulted some Tiers attempting to carry on their toddy-drawing trade in defiance of a prohibition declared by the local muslims. As one member of the Madras government, sent to Malabar soon after to investigate what was happening in the district, reported to his superiors, the Tanalur offenders had gone unpunished since the authorities (had) not hitherto dared to arrest them "for want of sufficient force".[59] The incidents at Pukkotur and Tanalur, with their open resistance of the execution of the orders of the authorities, were precisely the kind of "premonitory symptoms" which Justice Wigram had specified as the certain prelude to a "general outbreak" on the part of the Ernad Moplah when the possibility of rebellion had been discussed in the early 1880s.[60] By early August 1921 the months of propaganda concerning the supposed imminent crisis in political affairs in India, which had been directed towards the "fanatic zone" population by the non-cooperation movement, had excited the Moplah to such a pitch that each attempt to impose subordination on him led to confrontation.

58 Interview with K. M. Mahomed Haji, Anakkayam, 28 December 1974.

59 A. R. Knapp, 'Note on Malabar Affairs', 18 August 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed), **loc cit**, p 33.

60 H. Wigram, Officiating District Judge, South Malabar to Chief Sec., 8 November 1883, Govt. of Madras, **Malabar Land Tenures, p 17.**

In face of what was evidently a rapidly deteriorating situation in the "fanatic zone", district magistrate Thomas reported to the Madras government that the situation was beyond the powers of the district officials, and called for reinforcements.[61] In fact, as early as March 1921, concern over the situation in south Malabar had resulted in arrangements being made to supply more troops if necessary. Now, during the second week of August, the military force at Calicut was raised from a strength of a half to one of one and a quarter companies of Leinsters, with an Indian Pioneer battalion being warned to be ready to move from Bangalore if needed. At the same time a conference at Calicut between district civil and military officers, in the presence of A. R. Knapp of the government of Madras, decided on 14 August to intervene decisively to halt the erosion of British authority in Ernad. The intention was to make a surprise raid with 80 Leinsters, 100 Reserve Police and 60 of the Malappuram Special Force at 05.30 hours on 20 August on Tirurangadi, one of the few parts of the "fanatic zone" fairly easily accessible from the railway and (partly for the same reason) a centre of the Khilafat agitation. The main objective was the arrest under the provisions of the Moplah act of the chief activists there and, if no serious opposition were encountered, immediately to widen the net to include Tanalur and Pukkotur.[62]

In the event, the intended **coup de main** at Tirurangadi failed to trap more than a handful of the wanted men. Some of those who avoided capture, notably Erikunnan Ali Mussaliar, a Khilafat secretary at Tirurangadi, quickly sent out messengers to the surrounding **amsoms** to summon help, playing on traditional Moplah sentiment by circulating the canard that a local mosque was threatened by the government force. Within hours the govern-

61 Malabar Magistrate to Govt. of Madras, 10 August 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed), **loc cit,** p 18.

62 Malabar Magistrate to Capt. P. McEnroy, O/C Malabar Area and Operations Order, India, Secret, by McEnroy, n.d., L/PJ/6/1782, 6735/21 in 1/22.

ment party at Tirurangadi was confronted by thousands of Moplahs, inflamed by rumours of mosque desecration[63] and with improvised weapons, singing war-songs and shouting the **tekbir (Allah-o-Akbar,** God is Great), converging on them from both east and west. It says much not only for the determination of the Ernad Moplah in face of a supposed threat to the sanctity of his mosque, but also for the extent to which British authority in the "fanatic zone" had already been undermined, that the crowd approaching from the west failed to give an inch when charged with fixed bayonets, beating them down with their swords and sticks. Even when the police opened fire, shooting down some of the mob, its effect was to make it retreat only a few yards.[64] The government forces eventually drove off their assailants with the help of gunfire after themselves suffering several casualties. However, facing what was clearly an unprecedented challenge to British authority in Malabar, with their food supplies disrupted by the disturbance and with news of the wrecking of the railway line and station (Parappanagadi) which constituted their life-line back to Calicut, the government party, which included the collector, the district superintendent of police, the officer commanding Malabar and the Madras presidency deputy inspector-general of police, was in a most precarious position. Whilst the collector, at 19.00 hours on 20 August 1921, was handing over the situation as beyond civil power to the officer commanding Malabar, the intoxicating report was sweeping through Ernad that a great victory had been gained at Tirurangadi over the forces of the government which had lost both collector Thomas

63 This 'mosque desecration' rumour, often retailed in the form that the famous Mambram mosque (at which the remains of the Mambram Tangal, Syed Fazl's father, were interred) had been 'destroyed' by the government forces, rapidly spread throughout the "fanatic zone" from 20 August, firing anti-government feeling everywhere.

64 Malabar Magistrate to Govt. of Madras, 25 August 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit,** p 68.

and superintendent Hitchcock killed. The events of 21 August did nothing to dispel the impression of British defeat. What must have been an anguished government party was forced, despite the original intention under such circumstances to hold their ground, temporarily to abandon the "fanatic zone", leaving behind two missing Leinsters (who in fact fell into Moplah hands at Tirur) and a small force of troops cut off at Malappuram. Fighting off Moplah attacks all along the way, the main government party force marched back to Calicut along the wrecked railway line, arriving exhausted at 24.00 hours. Behind them, over parts of four **talukas,**[65] British authority had collapsed and Moplah **raj** was there for the taking. As the district magistrate himself later described the situation, the "fanatic zone" Moplah was "convinced that his time (had) come".[66] The great rebellion of 1921-22 had begun.

Conclusion

The common interest the Ernad Moplah and the advanced nationalist shared in opposing British rule and **jenmi** power was, in 1920-21, translated into practical terms in the "fanatic zone" in the form of an agitation the characteristics of which owed little that was fundamental to the non-cooperation movement. In the spheres in which a movement organised by educated urban middle-class elements might contribute to the successful mobilisation of a non-traditional challenge to the ruling power in Ernad, the non-cooperation movement was failure. Leadership in the south Malabar interior was very largely that of traditional Moplah organisation, limited in experience and attainment, narrow in perspective, and restricted in authority. In the promotion of secular forms of organisation fashioned specifically for

65 Ernad, Walluvanad, Ponnani and Calicut.

66 Malabar Magistrate to Govt. of Madras, 25 August 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed), **loc cit**, p 72.

the discharge of anti-**jenmi** or anti-government functions, the non-cooperation movement, even in western Ernad, achieved little.[67] On the contrary, it considered it necessary to pander to the traditional mode of Moplah mobilisation via the solidarity of the community of Islam for the achieving of aims essentially non-communal. The emphasis placed on the Khilafat rather than the non-cooperation aspect of the campaign, and the failure of the tenancy movement to prevail in the face of British repression and the conflicts dividing the movement, ensured that both the leadership and the methods of organisation which finally characterised the 1920-21 agitation in Ernad would be sectarian rather than secular. Only in the sphere which was the least painstaking, and in which the Congress **vakil's** own conflicts with the Ernad Moplah had least scope, that of the retailing of the story of the impending downfall of the British **Raj,** had the non-cooperation movement in vital contribution to make. It was the nationalist movement's success in this sphere, and its failure in those of leadership and organisation, which helped determine the outstanding characteristics of the "fanatic zone" Moplah's response to the defeat of the Tirurangadi raid of 20 August 1921.

67 This conclusion conflicts with the commonly-held idea that the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement played a major, if not the decisive role in organising the Moplahs. This I take to be the meaning of the following passage in Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., 'Peasant Mobilisation in Malabar: The Mappilla Rebellion, 1921' (Robert I. Crane, ed, **Aspects of Political Mobilisation in South Asia,** p 97):

"The Khilafat-non-cooperation movement ... provided a vehicle for the mobilization of the Mappilla community".

This has never, to the best of my belief, been demonstrated. However, as testimony to the seductiveness of the idea it might be mentioned that the present writer was at one stage attracted to it! See Conrad Wood 'Historical Background of the Moplah Rebellion, Outbreaks, 1836-1919'. **Social Scientist,** August 1974, Vol 25, p 28.

CHAPTER 5

The Moplah Rebellion of 1921-22

Certain facts[1] about the 1921-22 rebellion are not in dispute. For four days after the withdrawal of the collector's party to Calicut on August 1921, there were no effective means of official coercion in the "fanatic zone". At Malappuram there was a small party of about 30 troops and 29 special police, a detachment of the force sent to raid the Tirurangadi area on 20 August. However, this party, along with sub-divisional magistrate Austin, was surrounded by large numbers of hostile Moplahs. Elsewhere, practically every police post was overwhelmed by huge Moplah crowds which took possession of arms, indulged in considerable destruction of property, and rewarded the occasional show of resistance with assault, even death. Other targets of mob violence and plunder in this period of four days included public offices and treasuries, railway stations and hindu dwellings. The railway line was cut and roads blocked in innumerable places.

The first re-entry into the "fanatic zone" of government armed forces came on 25 August, the day a gunboat, H. M. S. **Comus**, had arrived off Calicut. During the few days after the disaster at Tirurangadi, the Moplah population of Calicut had been regarded with great suspicion by the district authorities. It was feared (in the event without justification) that the Calicut Moplahs would join the insurrection. With the arrival of the **Comus**, however, it was felt safe to send a proportion of

1 For further details see C.A. Innes, **Malabar** (Gazetteer), **pp** 87-91, on which this introductory section to chapter 5 is largely based.

the force of troops and special police at Calicut to the relief of Malappuram. This was effected on 26 August after the relieving force had inflicted a sharp defeat on an ambush by hundreds of Moplahs at Pukkotur on the way. In the meantime, a column of troops from Bangalore had, with difficulty, been making its way into south Malabar along the damaged railway line. On 30 August the British troops received the surrender of Ali Mussaliar. He had been surrounded in a mosque at Tirurangadi with a large number of supporters, some of whom were killed in an armed sortie against the troops.

The rebellion continued from September 1921 into 1922. On the government side were almost two brigades of infantry and 700 special police, the latter raised in the course of the rebellion. These forces had to deal with a large number of armed bands of Moplahs, comprising perhaps 10,000 men in all, operating over practically the entire area of Ernad and the adjacent parts of Walluvanad, Ponnani and Calicut. The greatest problems the government side faced were securing intelligence of the movements of the Moplah rebels and achieving the mobility necessary to hunt them down. The operations of the rebel bands consisted of ambushes and night attacks on the government forces and the harassment of certain non-combatants, especially hindus. The insurgent groups also attempted to set up their own systems of control over those civilians who had not fled the "fanatic zone" after 21 August. After the engagement at Pukkotur on 26 August, very few large-scale battles occurred. However, by November, the government force had begun to gain the upper-hand as the rebels started to surrender in large numbers. By late January 1922 it was possible for the first troops to be withdrawn. Martial law ceased to operate on 25 February. This date may be taken as the formal end of the insurrection even though, for a few months, there occurred a number of isolated skirmishes involving a very small number of rebels. From as early as November 1921 those who had fled the rebellion area had been returning slowly, and with considerable appre-

hension, to their homes. The administration had particular difficulty in inducing the return of those **jenmis**, the great majority, who had escaped from the area in the first few days of the rising.[2]

Official figures indicate that battle casualties totalled 169 on the government side whilst about 4000 rebels were killed or wounded.[3] As a result of the rebellion, 468 murders were reported, 5941 dacoities, and 352 cases of arson. The huge number of criminal cases was such that various forms of judicial bodies with special powers, including summary courts martial, had had to be set up by means of martial law ordinances. So many inhabitants of the "fanatic zone" were involved in offences that special cages had to be constructed to accommodate many of the prisoners in Malabar whilst thousands of others were sent to jails outside the district.

Such, in outline, are the generally accepted facts of the Moplah rebellion. Other aspects are, even today, matters of contention. The sufferings of hindus at rebel hands is a subject of particularly heated debate.[4] According to official figures, 320 hindu temples were destroyed in the course of the rebellion and 900 hindus forcibly converted to Islam in Ernad alone. Of some 20,000 refugees who fled the zone of rebellion, the great majority were hindus. Contentious issues such as the role of hindus in the rebellion will be considered within the following framework of analysis of the chief characteristics of the rising.

Preparation

The suggestion that a blueprint of insurrection had been prepared in interior south Malabar in the period

2 Statement of S. P. O'Donnell, Sec. to Govt. of India, Home Dept., extract from Council of State Debates, 28 March 1922, L/PJ/6/1769, 2771/22.

3 Lord Rawlinson, Commander-in-Chief, India to Sec. to Govt. of India, 6 October 1922. Confidential report on operations in Malabar, L/PJ/6/1782, 6096/22 in 1/22, p 10.

4 Compare, for example, K. Madhavan Nayar, **Malabar Kalapam**, p 173 and E.M.S. Namboodiripad, **Kerala—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow**, p 140.

preceding 20 August 1921 was widely propagated during the rebellion period and after. Thus, one member of the 1921 Madras secretariat has subsequently written of his conviction that "the rebellion started on a plan" of isolating Calicut and leaving the rest of the district to be overrun.[5] The opening acts of revolt, with the rapid cutting of communications links and the elimination of police posts in most of the "fanatic zone", were taken to be evidence of such preconcert. As Lord Willingdon, the governor of Madras, privately informed the viceroy in September 1921:

> "That the whole thing was very well organised is obvious...for at the word 'go', different bands tore up railways, bridges, and telegraph lines at great distance apart."[6]

It seems likely that the telegram Willingdon received from the Madras government in the second week of August whilst on his way to Ceylon, retailing the Malabar collector's opinion that there existed in his district "widespread organization amongst Mappillas to resist authority by force",[7] may have predisposed the governor to a conspiratorial explanation of the outbreak of the rebellion. Even more compelling would have been suspicion of the effect of Khilafat activities among the Moplahs. A week after the start of the rebellion Willingdon told secretary of state Montagu:

> "It is inconceivable to me that this wasn't thoroughly organized, for these Khilafat people have been for months secretly working on the minds of these fanatical people the wickedness of the British in regard

5 Sir Richard Tottenham (in 1921 'G.R.F. Tottenham', Under Sec., Govt. of Madras) 'Reminiscences written in 1964-65', **Tottenham Papers**, Ist notebook, part 10, CSAS.

6 Willingdon to Reading, 13 September 1921, **Reading Papers**, Vol 24, item 437, p 367.

7 Govt. of Madras to Willingdon (tel.), n.d., reporting on Malabar Magistrate to Govt. of Madras, 10 August 1921, Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 33.

to the Turkish Peace Terms, and the certainty of securing Swaraj through Gandhi's propaganda."[8]

In fact the concept of the Moplah Rebellion as a planned revolt receives little support from the evidence. Certainly the Ernad Moplah, partly as a result of Khilafat-non-cooperation propaganda, fully expected the downfall of the **Raj** forthwith, and under such circumstances it would be surprising had **no** provision been made for what had for so long been coveted. Even so the indications are that such preparation as occurred was most pervasive in the realm of morale.

The Moplahs' wresting of control of Pukkotur from the government on 1 August 1921 heightened the sense of anticipation of the defeat of the **Raj** which had been incited in the preceding period. Speculation was rife among the Moplahs of the area that the dying foreign power would be totally ineffective should it attempt to re-impose its authority against Moplah resistance. This emboldening calculation went so far as a certain amount of brave talk of the mastery with which the exploitation of local conditions would furnish the Moplah when the final battle for power came. However these prognostications amounted to a preparation no more elaborate than talk of the possibility of felling trees to paralyse British mobility and the ineffectiveness of the gun against the knife in such close country as Ernad.[9] Provision for more material was desultory. There seems to be no doubt at all that, in the weeks preceding 20 August, Moplahs in parts of the "fanatic zone" were having weapons, in the form of large knives or 'swords', made by the rural blacksmiths in anticipation of the approaching contest for power. Somewhat detailed arrangements, involving the preparation of Moplah names and dress for hindu women for example, are alleged to have been set on foot

8 Willingdon to Montagu, 27 August 1921, **Willingdon Papers,** Vol 4, p 224.

9 District Magistrate to Govt. of Madras, 10 August 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed)., **loc cit, p 18.**

before the outbreak of the rebellion in anticipation of the 'Islamisation' Mappilla **Raj** was to bring.[10] But apart from such rudimentary signs of preparation, evidence to support the "blueprint theory" of the genesis of the 1920-21 rebellion seems wholly lacking.

Indeed what is known of the events immediately following the government raid on Tirurangadi points irresistibly towards a very different conclusion. The Moplah response to the raid was characterised by improvisation rather than providence. Despite the manufacture of war-knives that had preceeded the rebellion, the Moplahs who swarmed into Tirurangadi on 20 August were generally most ill-prepared for combat. These hastily assembled mobs equipped themselves with arms largely by cutting staves from trees on their way. Many, lacking even this provision, extemporised during the collision with the police with whatever road metal lay at hand.[11]

To close study, the absence of overall direction and even, to a very great extent, co-ordination is an unmistakable feature of the events immediately following 20 August. The Moplahs of each narrow locality in the rebellion zone were, at the outset, subject to no external regulation. With such autonomy, the response to the news of the "defeat of the Raj" depended, to an extent, on local circumstances. Where leaders were absent or ineffectual, clear signs of indecision as to the course of action to be taken were evident at first. Some 'villages' did not join the rebellion until after a period of delay, as much as two months in the case of the two Ernad **amsoms** of Wandur and Arikkod. When action was taken, both its form and extent were subject to variation according to the locality, so that the Pukkotur Moplahs, to take the most striking example, ignored the call from

10 A. R. Knapp, 'Note on Malabar Affairs', 8 August 1921, **ibid**, p 33.

11 Statement of Kunnoth Mussa, arrested 23 September 1921 and a member of one of the 20 August mobs, n.d., Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 183.

Tirurangadi to rally for a confrontation with the government party. Instead, on 21 August, they attacked the **kovilagom** (palace) of the senior Tirumulpad at Nilambur.

Even so, it is quite true that, throughout the rebellion zone of Ernad and the contiguous parts of the adjoining **taluks**, the immediate targets of attack, along with the scattered police posts and other public buildings, were almost invariably the means of communication. In certain cases this was indeed a matter of some co-ordination in that, where news of the sensation at Tirurangadi spread outwards, via messengers, to the chief avenues of entry into the "fanatic zone" (notably the railway), the call was for them to be blocked. This was no superintended operation, with the disconnection of the "fanatic zone" at the strategic points of junction with the outside world, but a series of ramifying local initiatives entailing scores of hastily improvised mass assaults on the railway line along its entire length in the disturbed area. Thus, the track at Feroke was attacked when, at 17.30 hours on 21 August, two or three Moplahs came running from the south to call on the great throng of Moplahs, who had gathered on receiving intimation of stirring events in the direction of Tirurangadi, to imitate their example by destroying the line near Vadakampad bridge since a special train was coming from Calicut.[12] In fact, once consciousness had dawned that the anticipated time for the taking of power had at last arrived, it must rarely have required much prompting from the outside for Moplahs in any particular neighbourhood to establish what needed to be done. If **swaraj** were to be both constituted and safeguarded it was necessary not only to eliminate the remnants of British authority in the form of police posts and administrative buildings, but also to sever links with the outside world. The railway was the most obvious target. The district magistrate's party had,

12 Madras Mail, 30 September 1921, p 6.

after all, both entered and, on 21 August, was decamping from interior south Malabar via its route way and, since the whole "fanatic zone" had an interest in its obstruction, some external encouragement for the laggard was clearly in order. But what strongly suggests the absence of any overall management of the events immediately following 20 August was the tendency for each small realm in the rebellion zone to isolate itself, even from its neighbours. Accordingly, as soon as the government party had left Tirurangadi on 21 August, the local Moplahs sacked the nearby buildings connected with the defeated administration, smashed culverts and felled trees to insulate themselves from attack and Erikunnan Ali Mussaliar began his reign in the area.[13]

Such highly localised autonomy did not exclude, indeed it encouraged, large numbers of erratic forays against important nearby targets. Thus, Perintalmanna, the administrative centre of Walluvanad **taluk**, suffered three attacks in the first week of the rebellion, the first by local Moplahs on 21 August, the second by Puthangadi Moplahs on 22 August and the third by a gang from Karuvarakundu on 28 August.[14] Similarly, the headquarters of the British administration of Ernad, Manjeri, was raided several times in rapid succession by different Moplah bands after 20 August.[15] Sorties of this kind necessarily spread the spirit of rebellion to less venturesome **amsoms** on the way. This, significantly, was the case with the raid of the Pukkotur Moplahs on Nilambur and their foray against Manjeri immediately after. It seems natural that a group which for three weeks had successfully defied the authorities after setting up their own local **raj** would be most forward in interpreting the story of the government defeat at Tirurangadi as licence for such open and wide-ranging mobilisation against the traditional foes of the

13 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 45.
14 **Hindu** (weekly), 8 September 1921, p 9.
15 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 53.

jenmi and state. In fact, where government control was necessarily most remote, in eastern Ernad in the heart of the "fanatic zone", this tendency openly to spread the rebellion was most evident. But whatever may have been the case elsewhere, here it was done not in passing but with calculation and it was in eastern Ernad that the rising first showed signs of developing from its initial tendency to uncoordinated revolt towards the attempt for a more concerted development.

Organisation

In fact as early as 21 August there was evidence of such cooperation between the chief centres of insurrection in eastern Ernad. A large meeting of Moplahs in Pandikkad mosque, at which were present the two most wellknown leaders of the rebellion, Variankunnath Kunhamad Haji of Nellikuth and the Chembrasseri Tangal, apparently made some attempt to direct the seizure of power which was under way. Thus, we have the testimony of an eye-witness that the rebel leadership had advised this assembly that "arrangements (should be) made for governing the country."[16] From the time of this meeting, rebel leaders, especially Kunhamad Haji and the Chembrasseri Tangal, maintained contact with each other, sometimes through meetings but also via correspondence, such as the letter from Moplahs of the Tirurangadi-Vengara gang to C. Kunhalavi found on the body of a rebel at Nannambra on 28 November 1921.[17]

What is most striking in fact is the way in which the outbreak of general rebellion promoted an unprecedented flowering of political talent among the south Malabar Moplahs, at least in those areas not too accessible from the railway line. Apprehension of the inexorable employment of the apparently invincible

16 Deposition of P.W. Moosa Kutti, Pandikkad adhigari, Summary General Court Martial No 6 of 1921, Malappuram, 31 December 1921, MPP No 848 (Conf.), 1 November 1923, p 4, MRO.

17 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, pp 69 and 119.

power standing behind the **jenmi** had for decades imposed narrow limits to the organisation of the Ernad Moplah's challenge to the established order. The belief that this restraining influence was now inoperative released a verve for government rarely suspected since the previous period when British rule in Malabar was weak more than a century before. At that time Major Walker of the Malabar Commission had observed of the Moplahs of interior south Malabar:

> "There is an energy in their character and they would in our absence soon erect an empire in this part of the Province."[18]

In fact, in this earliest period of British dominion in Malabar, several leaders among the "enterprising and bold" Moplahs of Ernad and Walluvanad, aspiring to independence, according to Walker's testimony "began to exercise their jurisdiction over the country."[19] Whilst details of what this 'jurisdiction' comprised are few, the record is fuller in the case of the 1921-22 insurrection. Even in the less remote western parts of the rebellion zone "**Khilafat Raj** had been a very real thing" in the period the British were struggling to regain control of the situation, according to police superintendent Hitchcock.[20] In less accessible parts of the disturbed area such as eastern Ernad where rebel control remained unchallenged for considerable periods at a time and where, according to the special civil officer for the martial law area, the rebel regime was "rigorously administered",[21] it is clear that the outlines of the essential departments of government had begun to take shape.

An initial impulse among the Moplah population from 20 August was to turn the withdrawal of British power to their personal advantage by looting abandon-

18 "Essay on Malabar", n.d., **Walker Papers**, 182c5, p 114.
19 Walker, 'History of Malabar', Vol 2, p 621, **Ibid**, 184a1.
20 **Loc cit, p 120.**
21 F. B. Evans, 'Notes on the Moplah Rebellion', 27 March 1922; MPP No 682, 22 August 1922, p 14, MRO.

ed government buildings, helpless **jenmis** and other hindus of means. However, the principal rebel leaders were quick to attempt to safeguard their chief sources of revenue by declaring such free-lancing actionable. Kunhamad Haji in particular was severe in putting down looting. His interest in so doing is revealed in a proclamation issued by him and nine other rebel leaders declaring all property obtained by loot to be "Khilafat property" and directing that it be deposited with the "**Khilafat** authorities" on pain of severe punishment.[22] In fact, without the supply of food, arms and money commandeered from inhabitants of the area of insurrection, it is clear that the rebels would have lacked the means of continuing resistance to British rule. It is true that the levies of this seminal Moplah regime itself, on its hindu inhabitants in particular, could often seem, and sometimes no doubt were, quite arbitrary. This seems to have been implied in the remark of one rebel leader to two Nairs he had beaten for trying, on 24 October 1921, to escape from the Khilafat domain at Mavoor, that they had no business to carry away valuables which might be devoted to Khilafat purposes.[23] On the other hand, it is significant that captured rebels could feel impelled to claim that their gangs abjured looting and instead paid for everything.[24] There is little doubt that the tendency was certainly to justify, and presumably to regulate, the demands of Moplah **Raj** according to principles which were deemed proper, the usual tendency being to formulate the exactions in terms of a land revenue **kist** or instalment. Moreover, in interpreting the proceedings of this embryonic **Raj** it is by no means irrelevant to consider the war that was being conducted. Even the most constitutional of governments might find resort to ex-

22 **Madras Mail**, 8 December 1921, p 6.

23 Judgement. Case No. 12 of 1923. Court of Session. South Malabar, 23 March 1923. Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 268.

24 Statement of Vennathori Moyen Kutty, 26 April 1922. **Police Papers**, box 26, p 3.

ceptional measures necessary when engaged in hostilities. Of the rebel leaders, Kunhamad Haji for one was explicit about which of his revenues were devoted to his 'Weapons Fund': those derived from the sale of 'passports', in effect safe-conduct passes.[25]

These passes were in fact a most instructive aspect of the organisation of Moplah **Raj** in the rebellion zone. For military reasons the control of the movement of non-combatants, and more especially the intelligence they commanded, between the rebel-and the British-controlled territories was of crucial importance. The prohibition which, at least in the best organised rebel areas, was imposed on all exodus not specifically sanctioned, was enforced by the posting of "frontier guards" and the scrutiny of 'passports'. As early as 28 August 1921 a sub-inspector of police and two constables from the Nilgiris were killed by rebels at Edakkara as they were attempting to cross a Moplah **Raj** frontier without a pass.[26] But the development of Moplah 'passport' systems is of significance not only for its practical importance in the conduct of the insurrection but also for the light it throws on Moplah pretensions to legitimacy. Inherent in the injunction, with which rebel passes were inscribed, that, by order of the local Moplah leadership, the bearer should not be molested, was a concept of tutelage which could amount to the affectation of a virtual **Pax Mappilla**. Thus, inhabitants of the rebel areas might be warned that they left the Moplah **Raj**, whose frontiers were sometimes actually marked with Khilafat flags, at their own risk. As one refugee reported to the district magistrate on 15 September 1921, whilst in rebel hands he had been solemnly advised by Kunhamad Haji that Calicut, held by the British, was not safe but that his own territory of Nilambur was quite secure since he had conquered Ernad and Walluvanad and there was

25 Demi-official report of F. B. Evans, 14 September 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit**, p 239.

26 F. B. Evans, 'Notes on the Moplah Rebellion', 27 March 1922, MPP No. 682, 22 August 1922, p 14, MRO.

only Khilafat government there.[27] Whatever might have been the aberrations in practice, and they were not rare, the aspiration was evidently that Moplah rule should not be mere brigandage. Accordingly when, on 25 August 1921, the Vellikat Bhattathiripad of Porur was required by a Moplah leader of Wandur to provide Rs. 1000 for "Khilafat government", the demand was 'legitimised' in terms of the 'security' which was promised in return.[28]

In practice, this particular great **jenmi** found himself subject to levies from different bands. This occurred not only because of the extreme dispersion of Moplah authority at this early stage of the rebellion, but also because, already, leaders like Kunhamad Haji were on the move with their 'bodyguards' attempting to organise suzerainties. This was sometimes brought about, as in the above case of the Wandur Moplah, by bringing leaders who had already emerged in their own right into a subordinate relationship, occasionally at the invitation of the local leaders themselves. In other instances, in a schematic division of territorial responsibility, some kind of command structure issued from on high, ready-made to be superposed, with doubtful success, on the large number of local republics which were springing up all over interior south Malabar. Within a few days of the rebellion's outbreak, the Chembrasseri Tangal went to Pandikkad where he appointed 'rulers' over various Ernad **amsom**s by the issue of **sanad**s or commissions.[29] This particular suzerain structure did achieve, in at least one instance, a degree of practical reality. Kattingal Attakoya Tangal, proclaimed 'King' of Vellianchery and its vicinity, evidently considered himself as holding title from the Chembrasseri Tangal, supplying him with "large and frequent consignments of food provisions" and conveying his orders to the

27 **Madras Mail**, 17 September 1921, p 7.

28 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 57.

29 **Ibid**, pp 5-6.

population of the settlement.[30] Later, in October, it was reported that Kunhamad Haji had made a detailed apportionment of part of Ernad into baronies for his various lieutenants.[31]

Whilst such grandiose imperial aspirations were evidently not really practicable under the conditions obtaining during the rebellion of 1921-22, it is important to recognise the extent to which Moplah rule came to be structured (at least in parts of the rebellion zone for more or less lengthy periods) in areas of government apart from land revenue and passports. In the circumstances of the war being waged against the British **Raj** some kind of judicial administration was indispensable. Moplah 'courts', to which prisoners from the surrounding rebel territory could be referred, certainly functioned widely and in at least one case it is known that a Moplah form of "martial law" was proclaimed by tattoo to the effect that anyone seen moving about in the afternoon was liable to be shot.[32] Nor was the edge of the Moplah courts turned solely against those seen as opponents of the rebel regime. During Ali Mussaliar's short reign at Tirurangadi it was reported that the rebels had proclaimed that regular courts would be established to deal with popular grievances.[33] One such source of vexation which appears to have been brought before Ali Mussaliar, looting, is known to have been punished by another rebel leader, Kumaramputhur Seedi Koya Tangal, by means of terrorism, with a simulated 'execution' of three of his own men found guilty by court martial of **dacoity.**[34] Seedi Koya Tangal in fact seems to have been particularly ready to use the weapon of the courtroom to enforce discipline among his own men, for, in October 1921, another group was

30 District Magistrate's Court, 8 April 1922, MPP No 1049 (Conf.) 16 December 1922, pp 3-4, MRO.

31 **Madras Mail**, 21 October 1921, p 6.

32 **Ibid**, 15 September 1921, p 5.

33 **Times of India**, 30 August 1921, p 7.

34 **Madras Mail**, 21 September 1921, p 6.

court-martialled by him for "arresting innocent people".[35]

To some extent the organisation of Moplah rule encroached on areas of basically civil concern. Food supplies might be mobilised, though on an irregular basis, for the inhabitants of the rebel territories. Communications were taken seriously enough for the making of at least one attempt to recruit, with threats, the services of a postal runner acting on behalf of the British. Tolls were sometimes levied on the use of certain roads and ferries. In the course of the earlier part of the rebellion, letters were even received in Calicut from Ernad communicating the condescension of Kunhamad Haji to the passage of produce such as tea from Wynad through his 'republic' on payment of duty.[36]

On the other hand the organisation of Moplah **Raj** of necessity primarily subserved the conduct of the war effort. In the sphere of logistics, the mobilisation of sizable numbers of inhabitants of the rebel territories, both Moplah and hindu, was sometimes involved. The (hindu) south Malabar blacksmith population was very quickly secured to supply weapons for the rebel bands, and a large group of coolies who had been detained for some time in one rebel domain by the Moplahs testified to seeing no less than four such armourers at work making swords in this one **desam**.[37] For less skilled tasks, greater numbers might be involved. On 15 September one refugee from Kunhamad Haji's **Raj** reported a gang of a hundred Cherumar coolies organised for the construction of road blocks.[38] In the same area of north-east Ernad the Haji was responsible for the engaging, on cash wages, of agricultural labourers (Moplahs, Cherumar and other hindus) to harvest the Nilambur

35 **Ibid**, 24 October 1921, p 8.
36 **Ibid**, 17 September 1921, p 8.
37 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, pp 75-76.
38 **Madras Mail**, 17 September 1921, p 7.

Tirumulpad's grain crop for the supply of the rebel forces.[39]

The conduct of rebel hostilities themselves was conceded on occasions to be adroit by British officers charged with the responsibility of suppressing the insurrection. The organisation of the Moplah intelligence system attracted particular though, doubtless, grudging commendation. Hitchcock found himself able to say that the decision of a rebel meeting on 20 September to defend their **amsoms** by stationing scouts on all roads leading to enemy military stations was well-excuted.[40] Military organisation by rebel leaders operating in the eastern part of Calicut **taluk** (where the nature of the terrain, making the region relatively inaccessible, gave scope for the exercise of Moplah organisational talent) seems to have been particularly systematic. In this area the British forces seized much documentary evidence indicating that regular rosters of rebel personnel were maintained, men alloted to different sentry posts, receipts taken for the issue of arms, a careful system of signals devised to warn of the approach of troops, and elaborate arrangements made for the constant checking of passports at rebel control points.[41]

In all this unparalleled exuberance of Moplah organisational effort the influence of the British **Raj** as a model is constantly suggested. The rebel 'kists', 'martial law', 'tolls', 'passports' and, perhaps, the concept of a **Pax Mappilla,** are to all appearances traceable to the British empire in India as a prototype. It seems likely that, when rebel leader Seedi Koya Tangal issued a fiat that the percentage of the harvest payable to the Khilafat exchequer in his Mannarghat territories should be 60,[42] he was indebted to a precedent of British revenue administration theory wellknown in Malabar since the

39 **Ibid,** 30 September 1921, p 6.

40 **Loc cit,** p 69.

41 F. B. Evans, 'Notes on the Moplah Rebellion', 27 March 1922, **loc cit,** p 12.

42 **Madras Mail,** 8 October 1921, p 7.

start of the nineteenth century. Also, the fact that the insurgents conferred on their leaders the investments of authority in the form of captured uniforms of the **Raj** presumably had a significance which was wider and more figurative than the mere provision of clothing. However, particularly strong evidence of the moulding influence of British power structures lies in the rebels' constant use of British titles to authority such as 'Assistant Inspector', 'Collector', 'Governor', 'Viceroy' and (less conclusively) 'King'.

The use of such titles suggests aspirations to an overall regulation of the affairs of the rebellion zone which cannot have been realised. There can be no dispute that the marked tendency to decentralisation of command, which was a feature of the early part of the insurrection, persisted even after the attempt of leaders like Kunhamad Haji and the Chembrasseri Tangal to extend their influence. Throughout the period of the rising, whatever the countervailing efforts of these more ambitious Moplah leaders, there was a constant tendency for rebel authority to disperse. The instances of co-ordination and even amalgamation between the "innumerable scattered parties"[43] of insurgents, of which the rebel personnel comprised, proved unstable, so that Moplah organisation was characterised by a continual process of fusion and division. Thus, after the combined raid for arms and food on Pandalur in the Nilgiris beyond Nilambur on 10 December, in which sections of the gangs of Kunhamad Haji, the Chembrasseri Tangal, Mukri Ayamad and the Konara Tangal were involved the rebel force returned immediately to Malabar where it split up into the original gangs, each returning to its own huts.[44]

The incessant reassertion of the tendency of Moplah organisation to become decentralised owes something to

43 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 69.

44 Demi-official report of F. B. Evans, 23 December 1921. G.R.F. Tottenham (ed), **loc cit**, p 278.

the conscious policy decisions of rebel leaders. Whilst Kunhamad Haji and the Chembrasseri Tangal in particular seemed anxious to build empires in the rebellion zone, the reassertion of the power of the British **Raj** dictated the exercise of a suzerain rather than a material authority. During October 1921 Kunhamad Haji apparently spurned the approaches of a rebel band, known to the British as the "Mongam triangle gang', which wanted to join him, since it was deemed tactically to his advantage to have local groups operating over as wide an area as possible.[45] This same motive must have been an important factor in promoting the extreme apprehension shown by the insurgents when the British policy of securing the piecemeal surrender of rebel **amsoms** began to show results. In the highly mobile guerrilla warfare which the Moplahs were forced to adopt in an attempt to counter the British superiority in materiel, the rebel leadership was aware that the sub-division of the Moplah forces produced detachments of a size which, presenting few rationing problems, were not restricted in their scope to a few particularly productive **amsoms**.[46]

The Moplah leadership was therefore to some extent prepared to recognise the need for the rebels to operate on a small-scale, decentralised basis. Even so, this recognition was achieved only through experience of the frustrations which the early attempts to set up a more complex superstructure of control encountered. Very often this thwarting of the development of Moplah organisation was a result of the demands of the desperate struggle against the British drive to re-establish control in south Malabar. Thus, on many occasions, rebel attempts to activate what machinery of superintendence Kunhamad Haji and the Chembrasseri Tangal had been able to set up were thwarted by the sheer mobility made necessary by government operations.

45 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 70.

46 For the almost identical operation of this factor in the 1880-02 rebellion see chapter 2.

Decisions which should have been the province of the higher rebel authorities frequently devolved on subordinates when it was discovered that the rebel leaders had had to decamp.

But even without the pressure of the steadily increasing resurgence of British power, it is clear that the evolution of a more centralised form of Moplah control of the rebellion zone would not have been achieved without difficulty. Social, economic and geographic circumstances had for long encouraged a highly localised form of organisation and leadership in interior south Malabar[47] and it is clear that the 1921-22 rebellion was most effectively organised at this same parochial level. Moreover, as in the past, the prosecution of the Moplah cause tended to centre in each locality on the chief mosque, which was exploited for the purposes, among many others, of jurisdiction, administration and the conduct of hostilities. For a movement for which the sole means to organisation was via communal solidarity it is not surprising that the mosque alone was thought to be premises sufficient for the discharge of the functions of government which the rebels assumed from **Raj**, the court-houses, **cutcherries** and police posts of which were deliberately destroyed by the "fanatic zone" Moplah at the outset of insurrection. The sub-divisions of Moplah organisation were not the functional ones of modern political structures like the British **Raj** but largely self-contained local domains which were associated with each other by little more than aggregation.

The 1921-22 rising provided a wealth of example of how stubborn the resistance of local Moplah republics could prove in the face of dictation from outside. The traditional gravitation of the Ernad Moplah towards markedly decentralised forms of association by no means ruled out, as the incidents at Pukkotur and Tirurangadi in August 1921 demonstrated, the more or less spontaneous rallying of the Moplahs of one **desam** to the support

47 See above p 39.

of those of another. However, it also created the most favourable conditions for the play of dissension. Naturally the leadership of any movement is prey to the effects of failure to agree on the conduct of hostilities and that of the 1921-22 Moplah rising was no exception. K. Abdu Haji and his rebel band apparently developed an antipathy towards Kunhamad Haji, with whom they were for a time associated, over the issue of what part Moplah leaders themselves ought to take in the fighting.[48] Kunhamad Haji himself, said to be the most quarrelsome of all the rebel leaders,[49] separated with some bitterness from the Chembrasseri Tangal along with several of the latter's lieutenants when, in early December, the **Tangal** began to show signs of responding positively to British calls for surrender.[50] However, discord among the rebel Moplahs owed far more to jealousy over territorial and other pretensions. Thus, when, on 8 November 1921, a small gang under Mussaliar Kunhalu moved into the Kurumbathur area and looted the house of a Moplah under the protection of Palliath Moideen's Kaipakancheri gang, Moideen took back all the property and, after having had Kunhalu soundly thrashed, sent him out of the area with the royal sum of Rs 5 to compensate him for his trouble.[51] With such fiercely defended parochial sovereignty it is not surprising that the most ambitious rebel leader, Kunhamad Haji, should have discovered that the road to empire in interior south Malabar was by no means a smooth one. The attempt of the Haji on 28 August 1921 to subordinate the local rebel forces of Pandalur met with such sullen resistance that their leader, Madari Mukari, was slashed with a sword for declining to hand over the guns he had collected.[52] Further north in Ernad, at Arikkod, Kunhamad Haji,

48 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 79.

49 Demi-official report of F. B. Evans, 20 December 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham. (ed), **loc cit**. p 276.

50 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 107.

51 **Ibid**, p 94.

52 **Ibid**, p 53.

later in the rebellion, discovered that Karat Moideen Kutti Haji and the Konara Tangal were in full sway and that his own presence was not welcome.[53]

Leadership

The men who exercised such local dominion were, virtually without exception, Moplah inhabitants of the "fanatic zone". Those outsiders responsible, at various levels, for the introduction of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement into Ernad, far from playing a leadership role in the rebellion, were almost unanimous in their condemnation of the armed challenge to British rule their agitation had done so much to precipitate. It is true that the threat which the anti-hindu aspect of the rebellion[54] posed to communal relations on an all-India scale inhibited full and frank acknowledgement on the part of the Congress national leadership of what was happening to the non-muslims of Ernad under Moplah **Raj**. On the other hand, without by any means exonerating the authorities of the charge of 'provoking' the insurrection, the same leadership openly censured the Moplah method of fighting for **swaraj** as a violation of the principles of non-violent non-cooperation.[55]

At least as anxious to see the armed struggle of the Ernad Moplah against British rule halted were the nationalist leaders in closer touch with events in the rebellion zone. C. Rajagopalachari anathematised the rising as a "mad outburst" with "terrible consequences".[56] Another leading non-cooperator of Madras, Yakub Hassan, who had been imprisoned for his part in the events of February 1921 in Calicut,[57] applied for permission to visit

53 **Ibid**, p 79.

54 See below p 213.

55 Resolution of Congress Working Committee meeting, Calcutta, 6-11 September 1921, B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, **The History of the Indian National Congress, 1885-1935**, p 364.

56 **Hindu** (weekly), 15 September 1921, p 14.

57 See above p 142.

Malabar to try his hand at bringing the conflict to an end.[58] Yakub Hassan's ministrations were not welcome to Lord Willingdon, the governor of Madras. However, a party of activists from the non-cooperation movement in Calicut headed by K. P. Kesava Menon, the secretary of the Kerala Congress committee, was permitted by the authorities in Malabar, towards the end of August 1921, to visit the short-lived Moplah kingdom of Tirurangadi, on the understanding that it would attempt to pacify the local rebels.

This intercession with the Khilafat monarch of the area, Ali Mussaliar, for surrender in the interests of peace met with rebuff and Kesava Menon's mission was obliged to return speedily to safer ground.[59]

In fact the outbreak of the Moplah rebellion exposed in the clearest fashion what had been suggested by earlier incidents, such as that at Kizhakkot in March and that at Pukkotur in August 1921—that the juxtaposition of middle-class congressman and the rural Ernad Moplah in the struggle against the **Raj** and the **jenmi** was founded on no stable basis of programmatic agreement. Nor was unity of this kind likely to be achieved when any link forged by the coincidence of antipathy to British rule and **jenmi** privilege was subject to the stresses and strains of the traditional contentions between hindu **vakil** and muslim cultivator in the "fanatic zone". The kind of propertied professional man so prominent in the Kerala Congress leadership had in the past shown a healthy apprehension of Moplah violence.[60] This was no doubt the more especially the case when it was believed that, as with some of those pressing for the use of the non-

58 Willingdon to Montagu, 27 August 1921, **Willingdon Papers**, Vol 4, p 227.

59 Interview with K. P. Kesava Menon, Kozhikode, 17 December 1974.

60 See details of the telegram, 7 February 1919, from the President of the Bar Association, Manjeri to the Madras Government, (MJP No 1310, 9 June 1919, p 1) anxiously demanding the prompt suppression of the Moplah violence of that time.

cooperation weapon against the **jenmi** and the British, such men were dealers in the hatred **melcharth**.[61]

But if the Moplah-middleclass nationalist connection was suspect in face of the tension of the pre-rebellion period, it was unequivocally snapped by the eruption of Moplah confidence in August 1921 that the country was theirs. Whatever faith the Ernad Moplah had ever placed in the organised political strength of 'vakildom' as an asset in the struggle against the **jenmi** was made irrelevant when the Ernad Moplahs alone had apparently been able to dispose of the one power that stood between him and the landlord. The efforts of Congressmen of nearly every rank seemingly to rob him of this coveted victory with appeals to surrender can only have confirmed the Ernad Moplah's conviction that there was no good reason generally to exempt the Congress **vakil** from the rigours Moplah **Raj** imposed on the rest of its hindu citizenry.

Congressmen were reluctant to concede that their treatment at the hands of the Moplah rebel was not always strictly in accordance with "the wonderful sobering and restraining influence" which the non-cooperation movement was claimed to have exercised on the muslims of Kerala.[62] However, there can be no doubt that prominent figures in the local nationalist movement were numbered among those who personally fell victim to rebel activity. The temple at Morayur, belonging to a brahmin family which had shortly before the rebellion contributed to the organisation of the Khilafat agitation in the Kondotti area, was desecrated by the "Mongam triangle gang" which was recruited from the same general vicinity.[63] It would also appear that the **tarwad** (joint family) house in the rebellion zone of K. Madhavan Nayar, secretary of the Calicut Congress committee, and famous throughout Malabar as one of the "Kerala

61 See above p 131.

62 P. Ramunni Menon, Sec., Ottapalam Congress Committee, letter to **Hindu**, 3 March 1921, appendix 11, **Police Crimes in Ottapalam**, pp 23-24.

63 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 71.

Patriots" arrested as a result of the events in Calicut in February 1921, was, soon after the outbreak of the rising, attacked by the Moplahs, evidently much to his embarrassment.[64] Moreover, as far as the **vakils**, the section of society with which the nationalist leadership was most identified, were concerned, their fate at the hands of the Moplah rebels was graphically described by V. Narayana Menon, a teacher of Parappanangadi, who found himself cut off there in the days immediately after 20 August 1921. This eye-witness observed that the mob, far from responding to the appeals for calm of V. Rama Menon (the leader of the local bar), became "very furious", attacking the house of a "respectable Nair vakil" in which Narayana Menon was sheltering and chasing another local **vakil** "with a special vengeance towards him." This last unfortunate individual in fact made good his escape along with Narayana Menon and yet another **vakil** of the local bar.[65]

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that those men, not of the "fanatic zone" Moplah community, who had been primarily responsible for the Khilafat-non-cooperation agitation before the rebellion, "in many instances...men of some social standing and with a stake in the country and with property to lose" and who could see "to what length personal violence to individuals and attacks on private property might lead", should have "attempted in some cases to use a restraining influence".[66] In fact it must be said that, on the whole, Congress leaders in Kerala exercised what limited power they commanded in an attempt to thwart the progress of the rebellion. These efforts certainly assumed the form of propaganda against the insurrection through the medium of the written word. Stands in public were taken condemning the Moplah rebels, in some cases in protests against what was regarded as a predisposition among certain national figures in the Khilafat-non-cooperation

64 **Madras Mail,** 9 September 1921, p 5.
65 **Ibid,** 30 August 1921, pp 5-6.
66 Hitchcock, **loc cit,** p 142.

movement to find excuses for insurgent behaviour.[67] Leaflets denouncing the rising and appealing for non-violence were circulated. At the same time the attempts of Kerala nationalists to arrest the course of the rebellion took more hazardous forms.

There can be no doubt that in the early days of the rising, on the fringes of the rebellion zone where the impetus of the insurrection was weakest, Khilafat leaders sometimes played a significant part in obstructing the spread of the revolt. In British Cochin the local Khilafat party co-operated with the deputy collector at the beginning of the rebellion when it was not known how far the insurrection might spread.[68] The action of Kunhamad Moulvi, president of the Kerala province Khilafat committee, in appealing to local Moplahs from the steps of the Congress office at Ottapalam on 23 August 1921 to keep the area non-violent was probably not as momentous in quelling the spirit of revolt as some nationalists suggested.[69] The town was beyond the limits of the "fanatic zone" area, to which the rebellion was largely confined, and, like British Cochin, was never seriously threatened. Quite another matter however was the action of the Khilafat party of the largely Moplah[70] town of Ponnani which was the target at the beginning of the insurrection of one of those rebel forays which at that time did much to spread the resolve to take up arms against the government. The sub-magistrate of Ponnani,

67 Protests of K. P. Kesava Menon (Sec., Kerala Congress Committee), T.V. Mohammed (Sec., Ernad Khilafat Committee), K. Madhavan Nayar (Sec., Calicut Congress Committee), K. karunakara Menon (Treasurer, Kerala Congress Committee) and K. V. Gopala Menon (to Muhamad Ali and Gandhi) n.d., appendix III; C. Sankaran Nair, **Gandhi and Anarchy,** p 137.

68 Demi-official report of Malabar Magistrate to Govt. of Madras, 19 September 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed), **loc cit,** p 220.

69 P. Ramunni Menon, letter, 24 August 1921, **Hindu** (weekly), 1 September 1921, p 12.

70 Though Ponnani town was never within the "fanatic zone" 77 per cent of its population was muslim, compared with only 40 per cent in the case of Ottapalam **amsom.**

C. V. Gangadhara Ayyar, testified that, on 21 August 1921, he heard that Moplahs from the Tirur area on the fringe of the "fanatic zone" were marching on Ponnani. He therefore rallied the leaders of the town's Khilafat and anti-Khilafat factions and with a large number of local Moplahs confronted the insurgents at the point of access to the town, the bridge over the Conolly Canal. Eventually, with some considerable difficulty, the Khilafat leaders of Ponnani, along with Panchiliyakath Muhammad Haji, the secretary of the Tirur Khilafat committee, were able to persuade the rebels to turn back, so that Ponnani was very largely untouched by the rising.[71]

Further into the south Malabar interior, from which the momentum of insurrection was generated and where rebel control was generally undisputed, those Khilafat-non-cooperation leaders who found themselves caught in the midst of a rising of which they disapproved were in a far more difficult position than those in safety outside the rebellion zone. In the one outstanding and almost unique case of such a leader who was both a local man and a Moplah and yet who worked actively to thwart the rebels, that of the Tirur leader Panchiliyakath Muhammad Haji, considerable gallantry was shown in a perilous situation. An attempt by the police to concoct a case of "waging war against the King" against the Khilafat leader floundered in face of the evidence of certain Europeans. These men, besieged with a small government party in the courts building at Tirur by a Moplah mob, testified how Muhammad Haji and another Khilafat leader Ayupalli Moideen responded to their summons for help by urging the crowd to disperse, pressing it back from the building. Later the two Khilafat leaders hid those they had rescued in Muhammad Haji's own warehouse until they could be safely handed over to the military authorities.[72] On the other hand, the other major

71 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 47.

72 Judgement, Case No 74 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Malabar, 24 May 1922, **ibid**, pp 211-13.

instance of nationalist leaders finding themselves cut off in the rebellion zone provided less scope for heroics.

On the morning of the Tirurangadi raid which precipitated the rebellion, three Khilafatists, Muhammad Abdul Rahman (the secretary of the Kerala province Khilafat committee), Moideen Koya and K. Moidu Mussaliar, having discovered that some drastic government action was about to begin, had arrived at Pukkotur. Their assumption was that the three-week-old Moplah **Raj** there would be the first objective of the British forces; their anxiety to ensure that, in that event, the principles of non-violent non-cooperation would be observed by the inhabitants. When, soon after their arrival, the canard of the 'attack' on the Mambram mosque reached Pukkotur, with a call for assistance to be sent to Tirurangadi, K. Madhavan Nayar was brought from Manjeri in the hope that the influence of this celebrated "Kerala Patriot"[73] would be sufficient to restore calm. However, when Madhvan Nayar's admonition that it was against the principles of the Khilafat movement to attack the police or disobey lawful orders and his warning that the mosque attack story must be false were seen to be in vain, the small nationalist party returned to Calicut disconcerted. Their failure to exercise even the degree of influence Panchiliyakath Muhammad Haji and Ayupalli Moideen were able to exert in Tirur must largely be attributed to the fact that none of the group visiting Pukkotur were local Moplahs, Muhammad Abdul Rahman himself being "an educated young man of a rich and influential family in Cranganore, Cochin".[74] Not one (except Madhavan Nayar, who of course was a hindu) was a native of Ernad, or at all acquainted with the **taluk**,[75] and, as Hitchcock observed, the Ernad Moplah

73 See above pp 190-91.

74 R. H. Ellis, Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 27 October 1922, MPP No. 1076, 23 December 1922, p 1, MRO.

75 Nearly all the paid workers of the Khilafat-non cooperation movement operating in south Malabar were from north Malabar. Govt. of Madras. **The Non-Cooperation Movements in the Madras Presidency,** p 40, MRO.

would brook no control from hindus or north Malabar Moplahs.[76]

No doubt for this very reason another Khilafat-non-cooperation worker who found himself in the heart of the heart of the rebellion zone in the first days after 20 August, Muthal Puredath Narayana Menon, a Nair **vakil** of Perintalmanna in the south of the "fanatic zone", had previously gone so far as to identify with the Moplahs of this area by eating with them and dressing in the fashion of a Moplah **Tangal**. Narayana Menon, who as organising secretary of the Indian National Congress in Ernad from May 1921 until the rebellion, had been primarily responsible for the conduct of the Khilafat agitation in interior south Malabar, was clearly far more deeply involved with the "Jungle Moplah" than any other outside organiser.

He therefore must have found it virtually impossible to avoid compromising himself in the eyes of the British authorities when, soon after 20 August 1921, the rebels took control of Manjeri where he was staying. With no immediate power to challenge them, they looked to this familiar figure in the agitation for **swaraj** in Ernad to put his preaching into practice and defy the government with open support for the new regime. Narayana Menon was in fact later, in a decision which left a deep sense of injustice among Indian nationalists, convicted for "waging war against the King" and sentenced to transportation for life. However, as the judge himself allowed, it is difficult to conceive that Narayana Menon could have favoured a movement which had already come to entail the ill-treatment of his fellow hindus. His involvement with Moplah **Raj** must be accounted for by fear of the consequences to himself if he failed to comply with rebel expectations.[77]

Quite different from the case of the cadre of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement originating from outside

76 **Loc cit**, p 145.
77 **Ibid**, pp 217, 218 and 234.

the ranks of the "fanatic zone" Moplahs was that of those members of this community who had been recruited as the basis of Khilafat organisation in the south Malabar interior. These latter were subject, like all "Jungle Moplahs", to those pressures of interest and tradition which had made Ernad and Walluvanad a hot-bed of militant resistance to the local dominance of the **kafir**. They were therefore very little restrained in their response to the outbreak of insurrection by the precepts of non-violence and hindu-muslim unity which were enjoined by the movement to which nominally they subscribed. Local Moplah Khilafat leaders like Ali Mussaliar, with a family history of participation in fanatical outbreaks, Kunhamad Haji who, with a similar background, had also been suspected of being implicated personally in the 1915 outbreak and Palakkamthodi Avvokker Mussaliar, himself the tenant of two Nair **jenmis**, were far from opposing the Moplah recourse to violence from August 1921. On the contrary, they assumed the role of leaders of a convulsion which was expected to eliminate once and for all those evils the Ernad Moplahs felt had beset them for so long. In fact, instances occurred in which "fanatic zone" Moplahs who were Khilafat organisers before 20 August 1921 failed to participate in the rising.[78] Further, certain rebellion leaders appear to have played no part in the preceding political agitation.[79] However, in general there was a high degree of correspondence between those "Jungle Moplahs" who were local leaders of the Khilafat movement and those who undertook the leadership of the rising. For nearly all Moplahs of interior south Malabar the natural consummation of the Khilafat move-

78 Panchiliyakath Muhammad Haji of Tirur actively opposed the insurrection (see above p 193).

79 The most outstanding example would appear to have been the Konara Tangal. Even so his entry into the field against the British seems to have occurred only after what appears to have been the particularly provocative misbehaviour of certain government forces engaged in the suppression of the rebellion in the Tangal's vicinity of Chaliyapuram and Vazhakad in October 1921. Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 137.

ment was just such a violent attempt to seize power from the hands of their rulers as occurred in August 1921.

Under these circumstances the Moplah **Mussaliars** and **Tangals** who provided the greater part of the local leadership of the Khilafat movement in Ernad and Walluvanad **taluks** also figured most prominently in the rebellion. With the single exception of Kunhamad Haji, all the most celebrated rebel leaders, the Chembrasseri Tangal, Ali Mussaliar, Seedi Koya Tangal, the Konara Tangal, Avvokker Mussaliar and Karat Moideen Kutti Haji[80] were divines in the eyes of the Ernad Moplah. Moreover **Mussaliars** and **Tangals** were also heavily represented in the ranks of the more obscure rebel leadership.

The significance of the role played by the Moplah **ulema** in the rebellion consisted partly in the way in which the wider contacts of this particular section of the Ernad population helped spread the insurrection in its early stages. The Moplah **Mussaliars** were each usually attached to one or more of the mosques scattered across the face of the "fanatic zone", and most had been trained at the same religious establishment in Ponnani. They were therefore well placed to play a part in disseminating the call to rebellion in the crucial days following the government raid on Tirurangadi. Thus, when, on 20 August 1921, Ali Mussaliar sent out the story of the defiling of the Mambram mosque along with an appeal for assistance, his messengers were sometimes sent to contact the **Mussaliars** at neighbouring mosques. These buildings therefore sometimes provided rallying points for the mobs which converged on the collector's party at Tirurangadi.[81]

The fame of the Moplah **ulema** in the defiance of British rule from 20 August 1921 onwards, led certain

80 Karat Moideen Kutti Haji had been a teacher of religion at Pukkotur before the rebellion.

81 Statement of Kunnoth Mussa, 23 September 1921, Hitchcock. loc cit, pp 182-83.

officials to attribute responsibility for the rebellion to this group (along with "Khilafat agitators").[82] In any sense that the Moplah **Mussaliars** and **Tangals** were generally more zealous for the cause of Moplah **Raj** than their lay followers, this conception may be as confidently rejected as the earlier British thinking which ascribed a manipulative function to muslim divines in the time of the Moplah outbreak.[83] As in this earlier period, insofar as any lack of resolution or enthusiasm for challenging British rule is discernible, it was more likely to be detected among the ranks of the Moplah **ulema** than the laity. In this respect the reported response at the beginning of the rebellion of Moplahs at Manjeri to appeals for non-violence by a prominent hindu non-cooperator is significant. They apparently retorted that they would not remain silent even if the Mambram Tangal himself were to rise from his grave and order them not to create a disturbance.[84] Whether true or false, this report is entirely compatible with the uninduced enthusiasm which the Ernad Moplah showed, at least at first, for the rising. At the same time, the reported bravado of the Manjeri Moplahs obscures the undoubted presumption of rebellion participants in general that the "fanatic zone" **ulema** would in fact not fail to perform certain important functions which they were best fitted to discharge.

Reiterating their role in the outbreak period, Moplah divines were expected, and indeed usually took it upon themselves, to sanction the conduct of the rebellion by blessing combatants, weapons, forays and in fact almost any activity the rebels chose to undertake in the name of 'Islam'. Since the 1921-22 Moplah rebellion was the occasion for an almost unique attempt at government on the part of the Ernad Moplah, the licence of the **ulema** to interpret Islamic law was in demand for the sanctioning

82 Speech of Sir W. Vincent, Home Member, Govt. of India, 8 February 1922, **Madras Legislative Assembly Debates, Official Report 1922**, Vol II, Part II, p 2279.

83 See above p 45.

84 **Times of India**, 27 August 1921, p 11.

of rebel punishments. Thus in dealing with what he regarded as malefactors under the Moplah **Raj** Kunhamad Haji was in the habit of referring their cases to one Thatiyan Moidinkutty Musaliyar for sentence "according to the (principles of the) mussalman religion". It is a graphic comment on how free the approach of the Ernad Moplah could be to his need for religious sanction for activity considered to be in furtherance of his worldly interests that this **Mussaliar** blithely sought, and made every show of discovering, in his copy of the Koran, the precise punishments for which those who had, for example, supplied food to the British troops were liable under 'Islam'.[85]

In these circumstances the assertion of Hitchcock that those **Tangals** and **Mussaliars** who so often formed the leadership of the rebellion were no more than figureheads[86] can largely be accepted. Of course the function in the rising of the Moplah divines who were rebel leaders, though certainly not generative, cannot quite be reduced to mere decoration and symbolism. The Moplah **ulema** were uniquely fitted to play the part of legitimisers of an act of revolt which was the instrument of the ambition of the Ernad Moplah community at large for the creation of an 'Islamic' **Raj** of justice.[87] At the same

85 Deposition of P. W. No 3. Nayarveettil Unnian, 8 April 1922, Case No 52 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, Referred Trial No 52 of 1922, p 5, MHCA. Unnian testified as follows: "Paruvarath Moideen Kutty was brought up before him. Kunhamad Haji said to him 'Did you not give eggs...to the troops'. He admitted it. Then Kunhamad Haji asked what punishment should be given to him under the rules of Khilafat for this. Ist accused had a book in his hand, a book of the Koran. He referred to it and said, 'This man must have 20 **blows**'."

86 Hitchcock to Tottenham, 2 July 1923, MPP No. 394 (Conf.), 29 April 1926, p 51, MRO.

87 In the more meagre record of the 1800 rebellion there are indications of the Moplah divine sanctioning what also purported to be a struggle in the name of 'Islam' (see above p 97). Of course, the fact that those Moplah **Muppans** who had run foul of the law were the most obvious target of advancing British power dictated the prominence of Moplah laymen in the 1800 revolt.

time it may safely be presumed that the ties of interest which bound the **ulema** in Ernad to their congregations[88] would ensure that their power of sanctioning the rising would not generally be withheld.

Of course the primary task facing the muslim population of interior south Malabar from August 1921 was the military one of securing Moplah **Raj**. Under these circumstances, except in rare cases where Moplah divines at the head of rebel bands showed a personal flair for the organisation of hostilities, this crucial function was discharged by laymen who acted as their 'lieutenants'. Thus, in the case of almost every Moplah divine who operated in a leadership capacity in the rebellion, there can be identified one or more 'lieutenants' or "right-hand men", having the responsibility for the conduct of the war against the government. In the case of the Chembrasseri Tangal, it was apparently one Amakundan Mammad who acted as lieutenant, other pairs being Seedi Koya Tangal and Thaliyil Unnian Kutti, Ali Mussaliar and Karadan Moideen, and Malappuram Kunhi Tangal and Vadakke Vittil Mammad. It was the necessary dependence of the priestly leadership on their lieutenants for the vital task of organising the armed challenge to the British **Raj** that no doubt led Hitchcock to the view that the former were mere cyphers. Certainly there were plenty of occasions when the generally sedentary **ulema** delegated the main decision-making to their lieutenants. Thus, at the beginning of the insurrection the appeal of K. P. Kesava Menon for the surrender of Tirurangadi to the government forces was referred by Ali Mussaliar to his 'Minister' Chenimathil Lavakutti and to his "Commander-in-Chief" Chittambalan Kunhalavi.[89] Moreover paramount importance of the part such Moplah 'lieutenants' played in the rebellion is conveyed by the pattern which became established for the priestly leaders of in-

88 See above p 46.

89 Interview with K. P. Kesava Menon, Kozhikode, 17 December 1974.

surgent bands quickly to surrender when their "right-hand men" were killed or captured.

The chief task of the lieutenants of the clerical leadership of the rising was that of the practical organisation of day-to-day rebel affairs. Consequently, those who emerged to assume this role tended to be men whose occupation provided them with experience most relevant to performing this function successfully. Thus, it is no surprise to find among the ranks of the lay Moplah organisers of the rebellion Thaliyil Unnian Kutti the **adhigari** (village headman) of Thiruvazhamkunnu **amsom**,[90] **kariastans** (agents) like Amakundan Mammad and Thonikara Ayamu, and even notorious organisers of crime like Karadan Moideen. On the other hand the leadership talent drawn upon for the insurrection was by no means confined to such narrow sections of the Moplah population of Ernad. Among the leaders of the rising were to be found cultivators, teashop-keepers, gangers, traders, labour contractors, carters and also Moplahs from the lowest social and economic strata of the community. This last group included not only the occasional **verumpattomdar** like Achuthodi Kunhuppi, a rebel leader of Tuvvur in eastern Ernad,[91] but even men living close to the margins of subsistence by whatever menial or labouring employment they could secure. Chenimathil Lavakutti and Chittambalan Kunhalavi, the lieutenants of Ali Mussaliar, appear to have been men of such standing, Kunhalavi perhaps owing his position to the fact that he was something of an athlete.[92] The case of another celebrated rebel leader of lowly status, Kizhisseri Ayamad, described as "a man of no means" who "live (d) by

90 Even so, those **adhigaris**, the majority, who were hindus, and also the greater proportion of those who were muslims, were opposed to the rebellion.

91 Cross-examination of P. W. No 2, P. Narayana Panikar, 24 October 1922, Case No 182 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, Referred Trial No 20 of 1923, p 6, MHCA.

92 Interviews with A. P. Kunhahamed, Mambram, 14 December 1974, K. Moideen Kutty, Tirurangadi, 15 December 1974, Chelupadan Mohammed, Tirurangadi, 21 December 1974.

cooly", may perhaps be attributable to his position as mukri (servant and grave-digger) of Ponniakurishi mosque.[93]

Support

The diversity of social background of the leadership of the 1921-22 Moplah rebellion was a reflection of the breadth of support the insurrection commanded from the muslim community of interior south Malabar. Indeed there is an enormous mass of evidence to indicate that the great majority of "fanatic zone" Moplahs became implicated in one way or another in the challenge to British authority in the early stages of the rebellion when it was easy to believe that the end of the **Raj** had come. Hitchcock for example asserted that, in the heart of the rebellion zone, eastern Ernad, "all Mappillas with very few exceptions joined the rebellion".[94] Even at Tirurangadi on 20 August 1921 when the settlement was occupied by the powerful raiding party of the district magistrate, the government force could only muster about 30 opponents of Ali Mussaliar out of a total Moplah population of 1750.[95] Such was the impression of total hostility to the forces of the British government on the part of the Moplah community (including even women and children) of many parts of the rebellion zone that the military anticipated that in certain areas the rebellion would continue until every Moplah was either exterminated or arrested.[96] Some conception of the extent of Moplah involvement is also conveyed by official statistics. Apart from the 2-3,000 rebels estimated to have been killed in the course of the insurgency, the authorities registered court cases against some 60,000

93 Deposition of P. W. No 2, M. K. Achuthan Nayar, 19 July 1926, Case No 30 of 1926, Court of Session, South Malabar, Referred Trial No 56 of 1926, p 4, MHCA.

94 **Loc cit**, p 54.

95 **Ibid**, p 37.

96 O/C Madras to Army H. Q., 24 October 1921, L/PJ/6/1732, 7362/21, in 1/22.

Moplahs for their resistance to the authorities[97] in an area in which the total male Moplah population (of all ages) must have been in the order of 23,000.[98] Throughout the period of British rule in Malabar, opposition to the power of the high-caste hindu and the foreign dominion which promoted that power had been a characteristic of the rural Ernad Moplah community at large. It is therefore not surprising that the opportunity to deal finally with both objects of antagonism simultaneously by seizing control of the "fanatic zone" should have involved such mass participation.

But whilst the great mass of the interior south Malabar Moplahs plunged into involvement in the rising in the days immediately following 20 August 1921, certain sections of the community never showed much sympathy for the rebel cause. Even before the outbreak of the insurrection, a widening rift was patent between the great majority of Ernad Moplahs, who were prepared to challenge British authority, and the large Moplah property interests, mainly rich merchants, standing to lose fortunes in the event of a breakdown of law and order. Thus, in early August 1921, the citizens of the youthful Moplah **Raj** at Pukkotur were reported to have stoned a passing car occupied by two wellknown anti-Khilafat Moplah merchants of those parts.[99] Once the rebellion had started in earnest it seems to have been the influence of the big Moplah merchant interests in Calicut which played a major part in preserving the peace in the capital of Malabar. In the "fanatic zone" itself the small number of very rich trading Moplahs like Khan Bahadur Kalladi Moidutti Sahib "with a large stake in the country

97 MPP No. 742 (Conf.), 25 May 1932, p 147, MRO.

98 The total Moplah population of Ernad in 1921 was 236,873. Parts of three other taluks, Walluvanad with a Moplah population of 131,497, Ponnani, 228,522 and Calicut. 86,952, were involved in the rising. Half the muslim population of Walluvanad, Ponnani and Calicut added to the total for Ernad gives some 460,000 Moplahs, male and female.

99 **Madras Mail,** 15 August 1921, p 7.

and employing much labour", as wellknown supporters of the government, were obliged to flee.[100]

However, one section of the Ernad Moplah community which was more prosperous than the common run of coolies, poor **verumpattomdars**, teashop-keepers and porters did not generally stand aloof from the insurrection of 1921-22. These were the substantial **kanam** tenants who played such an important role in the earlier organisation of resistance to the **jenmi** and defiance of British rule. Material relating to the social and economic status of Moplah participants in the 1921-22 rebellion is often deficient. Even so, it is practically certain that one major rebel leader Amakundan Mammad, at one time an agent of a big Angadipuram timber merchant but also a substantial cultivator in the eastern part of the "fanatic zone", was a big **kanamdar** of the type which had been so prominent in anti-**jenmi** and anti-British manifestations in the past.[101] Moreover, reports on the 1894 outbreak indicate that the family of rebel leader Kunhamad Haji, a number of whose close relations were implicated in that outbreak, had been comparatively prosperous cultivators and therefore almost certainly **kanamdars**.[102] Useful evidence of the participation of this element in the 1921-22 rebellion is also provided by the investigation into the background of the 70 men who, convicted of felonies connected with the insurrection, died of suffocation on 10 November 1921 in a luggage van which was transporting them out of Malabar.[103] Forty six per cent of the victims were mere coolies owning property worth not more than Rs 65 each. Another 27 per cent, though of different occupations, also owned property worth Rs 65 or less. However, ten of the 70 were Moplah cultivators in rather better circumstances, and of these the most substantial possessed

100 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, pp 48 and 89.

101 **Ibid**, p 55.

102 H. Bradley, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Sec., 16 May 1894, MJP Nos 2186-92, 8 September 1894, pp 93-96, 98 and 107.

103 This became known as the Train Tragedy.

property valued at Rs 6000, whilst another was worth Rs 1500.[104] It seems most likely that Moplahs of this kind would have been well-to-do **kanamdars.**

Another category of south Malabar Moplahs which was generally hostile to the insurgents was that of men who had some experience of government service. Moplahs serving with the police forces were subject to particularly strong insurgent pressure to forsake their allegiance to the Crown. Even so, acts of disloyalty by Moplah police seem to have been rare, one of the chief occasions being on 20 August 1921 at Tirur when, on hearing the **tekbir** (the cry **Allah-o-Akbar,** God is Great) of the mob, out of 17 members of the Reserve Police, four said they felt unable to fight and lay down their arms. Of the 61 Moplahs serving as ordinary policemen in the rebellion zone on 20 August 1921, when each police station was attacked by huge crowds of Moplahs, about a dozen joined the rebels, three were killed by the insurgents, three were later promoted for good work and two decorated.[105] Considerable resistance to the pressures to accede to the rebellion was in fact offered by every category of Moplah government servant except one.

PARTICULARS OF THE 70 CONVICTED REBELS WHO DIED IN THE 'WAGON TRAGEDY' OF 10 NOVEMBER 1921[106]

Occupations		*Property*	
Coolies	32	None	31
Cultivators	19	Rs 5- 65	21
Koran Readers	4	Rs 75- 200 a	10
Teashop-keepers	3	Rs 300- 800 b	5
Mosque attendants	2	Rs 1000-6000 c	3
Religious teaching	2	Total	70
Petty merchants	2		

104 See table below.

105 Hitchcock, **loc cit,** pp 165-67.

106 Compiled from biographical details given in Govt. Order No 290, 1 April 1922, MPP.

Traders	2	*Community*	
Small scale timber merchant	1		
Goldsmith	1	Moplahs	67
Carpenter	1	Hindus d	3
Barber	1	Total	70
Total	70		

a This total includes three cultivating brothers possessing joint property worth Rs 300 and a Koran reader with property worth Rs 200 but with Rs 70 in debts.

b Includes a cultivator with property worth Rs 600 but with Rs 500 in debts.

c Includes a trader whose father was worth Rs 1000 but who was also indebted to the same amount.

d Comprising 2 cultivators and 1 goldsmith, none with property.

Although isolated cases occurred of Moplah ex-sepoys rallying to the side of government in the course of the rebellion, in general those with experience of service in the armed forces of the Crown showed little of the resistance to the rising which was evident among other categories of government servant. In fact there can be no doubt that the insurgents were able to draw on the military expertise of large numbers of Moplah ex-sepoys who joined their ranks which in some cases, such as with the gang of Kunhamad Haji, were made up largely of men of this type. Perhaps uniquely in the Ernad Moplah's modern experience of government service, the sepoy's taste of public employment was interrupted and unsatisfactory. The recruitment to the Army of Moplahs, always very largely from the "fanatic zone", dated only from the last years of the nineteenth century. Estimates of their soldierliness had been favourable. Even so, by the 1900s they had attracted the antagonism of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in India. It is clear from his own private papers that, at least as early as 1904, Lord Kitchener was most anxious to see Gurkhas take the place in the Indian Army of Madras regiments like the 77th and 78th Moplah Rifles to which

he showed himself antipathetic.[107] Meeting resistance to his plans from high government circles, Kitchener seems to have obliged the authorities to accept his plan for the disbandment of the Moplah regiments by what was contemporaneously described as "a cruel scheme for bringing the officers and men of the two Battalions into general contempt".[108] In 1905 there was arranged a sudden transfer of the 78th Moplah Rifles from the tropical south of the sub-continent to the North-West frontier where, Kitchener had disingenuously assured his superiors, the regiment would "have the advantage of being associated with frontier troops, and enjoy special facilities for training".[109] In fact failure to provide adequate equipment to contend with the northern winter ensured the breakdown of the regiment with more than a quarter of its complement hospitalised. Lord Kitchener's handiwork, described by the **Madras Mail** at the time as "nothing less than disgusting", was completed by an ingenious manipulation of army regulations. This reduced both Moplah regiments to mere skeletons, the parading of which in cantonments where "low-class gharry-wallahs" were driving about in discarded uniforms of the Moplah Rifles afforded merriment to every other regiment. The disbanding of the "sickened"[110] troops of the two Moplah regiments was effected in 1907. However, even after the outbreak of the great war, it was reported that Ernad and Walluvanad were filled with Moplah ex-sepoys who vividly remembered their treatment in the British army.[111] Despite the poor reputation of the army which had been communicated to the younger Moplahs of the "fanatic zone", special efforts during the

107 Kitchener to Lord Roberts, **24** March 1904, **Kitchener Papers**, 30/57, No 29, p 38, PRO.

108 Editorial, **Madras Mail**, 27 November 1906, p 4.

109 Govt. of India, Army Dept. to Sec. of State, 28 March 1907, Despatch No 34 of 1907, M4982/07 L/MIL/3/183, p 3.

110 Editorial, **Madras Mail**, 27 November 1906, P 4.

111 Innes to Chief Sec., 17 July 1914, MPP No 1337 (Conf.), 27 October 1914, pp 5-6.

war years finally succeeded in producing a Malayali regiment, including muslims, by 1918. This second trial was even more short-lived however. In the month preceding the rebellion the troops of the 2-73rd Malabar Infantry, who had been returned to India after being considered unfit for service in Mesopotamia, were disbanded to face the same problems of subsistence that had faced the discarded sepoys of 1907. The history of the Moplahs in the Indian Army from 1905 to 1921 affords an explanation for the failure of one section of the Ernad muslim community with experience of government service to reject participation in the rebellion of 1921-22.

The largest group of interior south Malabar Moplahs to keep aloof from the armed challenge to British power was the bulk of the followers of the Kondotti Tangal. Though the **Tangal**, himself was obliged to concede that not a few of the adherents of his sect were drawn into the insurrection,[112] this was certainly not the case with the majority. Kondotti, after some initial excitement immediately following the Tirurangadi raid, was known as one of the very few areas friendly to the forces of government in the whole rebellion zone. Such was the exasperation of insurgent leader Kunhamad Haji with the failure of Kondotti to play its part in the rising that, on 28 October 1921, he organised a raid on the settlement, fighting taking place between the rival groups of Moplahs at the residence of the Kondotti Tangal.[113] Even so, the work of the **Tangal** in trying to ensure that his followers did not participate in the rebellion was not all it was sometimes made out to be in terms of loyalty to the **Raj.** The traditional astuteness shown by successive Kondotti Tangals since the start of British rule in Malabar was evident throughout the 1921-22 rising.

112 Memorial of Takkiyakkal Sheik Mushtaka Shaha Valiya Thangal of Kondotti to governor of Madras, 4 March 1922, MPP No 669, 22 August 1923, p 3, MRO.

113 Demi-official report of F. B. Evans, 31 October 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit, p 256.**

Whilst the **Tangal** on the whole succeeded in keeping his sect from active participation in the insurrection, there is no doubt that he and his retainers turned his reputation for loyalty to their own profit through lucrative dealings with the rebels. This traffic included the hawking to insurgents of supplies of many kinds, places of refuge, alibis and good conduct passes in the name of the Kondotti Tangal. Hitchcock later described the **Tangal**'s conduct during the rising **as "disgraceful"** and the government of Madras declined to honour him for his work in 1921-22.[114]

Support for the 1921-22 rebellion was confined to those sections of the Ernad Moplah population, by far the most numerous, for whom the British rule which had for so long seemed to buttress high-caste hindu power, had none of the compensating advantages which the Moplah **inamdar**, government servant and merchant might derive. But despite the most limited nature of the loyalty on which the government forces were able to rely from the Ernad Moplah community, the mass enthusiasm for Moplah **Raj** shown at the start of the rising was not prolonged. As long as the might of the military engaged in the suppression of the rebellion was directed solely against actual identifiable insurgents, the latter continued to receive assistance from the Moplah population at large in vital spheres such as intelligence. This situation changed however when, after some two months of exasperating failure to account for any of the main bodies of rebels or indeed make "much net progress in quashing the rebellion",[115] British troops began to mete out more drastic treatment to the Moplah population which was sustaining the insurgency.[116] From the first the soldiers

114 MPP No 669, 22 August 1923, p 5, MRO.

115 F. B. Evans, 'Note on the Rebellion', 15 March 1922, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit**, p 49.

116 This change in policy by the military seems to have been a result of pressure to end the rebellion quickly exerted by Sir W. Vincent, Home Member, Govt. of India, who from 18 to 21 October 1921 paid a personal visit to the rebellion area for consultation

had tended to treat every Moplah "as **prima facie** an enemy".[117] However, the real turning-point in the behaviour of the military, and in the course of the rebellion, came with the raid on 25 October 1921 by men of the Dorset Regiment on Melmuri **amsom** in which dwellings were burnt wholesale and widespread slaughter of the Moplah population, including an unknown number of those who were not active rebels, occurred.[118] The Melmuri raid was only the first of a series of similar incidents which on 12 November 1921 provoked from the special civil officer for the martial law area the comment that "on the whole" he would "not be sorry to see the last of the Dorsets".[118a] But, whatever the unease occasioned by such methods, there can be no doubt about their effectiveness in eliminating the crucial support rendered to the rebel bands by the Moplah population generally. The Melmuri raid started a series of submissions (normally called "surrenders" and usually accompanied by Moplah appeals for protection from the troops) to the authorities by the terrorised Moplah population of the rebellion zone **amsom** by **amsom.** The surrendering of an **amsom** entailed the parading by the authorities of its Moplah inhabitants for the recording of their names and the offer of a promise to avoid active military operations in the settlement as long as its population denied gangs access to the **amsom** and rendered active assistance for the arrest of rebels. As with its engineering, the collapse of the rebellion was essentially a matter of morale. The return of the sense of awe of the power of **Raj**, which for more than a century before 1921 had precluded rebellion by the Ernad Moplah, was recognised

with the local authorities. G. O. C. Madras to Govt. of India (Secret), 25 October 1921, L/PJ/6/1782, 7362/21 in 1/22.

117 F. B. Evans, 'Note on the Rebellion', 15 March 1982, **loc cit,** p 53.

118 The official figure for Moplahs killed the Melmuri raid was 246. Demi-official reports of F. B. Evans, 26 October and 2 November 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit,** pp 255 and 257.

118a Demi-official report of Evans, 12 November 1921, **ibid,** p 261.

by the insurgents as dooming the rising to failure.[119] In fact, despite the pressure of intensified rebel counter-terror directed towards those Moplahs inclined to come to terms with the British, the closing months of the insurrection, November 1921-March 1922, were marked by the withholding of support to the rising by increasing sections of the Moplah population. Indeed, in a number of cases, Ernad Moplah communities chose to demonstrate to the British troops their loyalty to the **Raj** by participation in operations against the insurgents.

Whilst the interior south Malabar Moplah population in general was of such vital importance, at least until late October 1921, in sustaining the rebellion of 1921-22, the case of their hindu neighbours was entirely different. In particular, whilst hindu claims that their community held completely aloof from active participation in the rising[120] are incorrect, there is no doubt that hindus joined the rebels only in paltry numbers, for the most transient period and in marginal areas of the rebellion zone. Wherever details of those arrested or convicted for involvement in the insurrection are available they record an overwhelmingly high proportion of Moplahs. Of the 1,570 convicts admitted from 1 October 1921 to Bellary Camp, which from that date was converted into a jail exclusively for rebellion prisoners from Malabar, no less than 1,555 were muslims and only 15 hindus.[121] It is true that poor hindus sometimes formed part of the gangs which looted hindu mansions. However the proportion of non-muslims in these bands was almost invariably tiny, whilst the phenomenon was most common outside the

119 Letter to 'C. Kunhalavi and friends' from 'K. Kutti, O. Ahammad Kutti and K. Syedali' found on the body of a rebel at Nannambra, 28 November 1921, quoted in Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 119.

120 Speech of Rao Bahadur T. Rangachariar, extract from Legislative Assembly debates, 5 September 1921, p 132, L/PJ/6/1774, 6646/21.

121 Report on Administration of Jails, Madras Presidency, 1921, ML(G)P No 1588, 27 June 1922, pp 30-31.

heart of the rebel-controlled area (the traditional "fanatic zone") and generally did not survive the first few days of the insurrection when there was still a possibility of confusion about the true character of the rebel **Raj**. On or near the southern margins of the rebellion zone, at Cheruppulasseri, Mannarghat and Perintalmanna-Angadipuram, Moplah influence was locally subordinate, largely because of hindu numerical superiority, but also owing to (in the case of Perintalmanna-Angadipuram) the existence of a concentration of hindu **vakils**. Consequently, it was here that certain hindu non-cooperation workers played parts of some importance in the assaults on government property which occurred in the first intoxicating days of apparent British defeat after 20 August 1921. Even so, even **this** non-muslim participation in the rising involved only a relative handful of hindus, the great majority of activists being Moplahs. Typical was the situation at Cheruppulasseri, a **desam** with a population in 1921 of 1,546 hindus and 379 mussalmans, and part of an **amsom** of the same name comprising 3,409 hindus and 1,087 mussalmans, where a local Moplah police eye-witness claimed that on 23 August 1921 there were only about 25 hindus in an insurgent mob of some 400.[122] Moreover the approach of these small numbers of hindu non-cooperators to the organisation of insurrection proved to be quite different from that of the "fanatic zone" Moplah. Invariably the resistance of this non-Moplah element evaporated with news of the first approach of the military sent to suppress the rebellion. Even before the appearance of the challenge presented by the British troops in those few places where the conduct of the rising lay in the hands of hindu non-cooperators it tended to be half-hearted. At Perintalmanna-Angadipuram for example, the non-cooperators, who included some of "the more respectable well-to-do class" of Moplahs as well as hindus, had led the initial

122 Deposition of P. W. No 1, V. P. Alavi, 8 March 1922, Case No 7 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut; Criminal Appeal No 309, of 1922, p 3, MHCA.

attack on government property on 22 August 1921. However "fearing danger at the hands of the mob" they quickly formed, with several officials, a local defence or vigilance committee. This lasted no longer than 28 August when Moplahs from the traditionally 'fanatic' areas of Karuvarakundu and Melattur, unimpressed with its circumspect work, drove out its participants.[123] There can be no questioning the statement of Hitchcock that the rebellion owed its vigour solely to the Moplahs.[124] Indeed the vast majority of hindus of interior south Malabar very quickly became apprehensive of what from the very first was a Moplah rising. Nor was this apprehension unfounded. In the event it was indeed hindus who in the main fell victim to the Moplah rebellion.

Prosecution

Perhaps no more eloquent testimony to the widespread suffering of hindus at the hands of the Moplah rebels is available than that of those Congressmen who, in the name of hindu-muslim unity, had attempted to recruit the Ernad Moplahs as part of their own challenge to the British **Raj**. K. Madhavan Nayar, one of the foremost Kerala Congressmen and who had close first-hand experience of the rebellion in the days immediately after 20 August 1921 when he found himself in Ernad, described the Moplah attack on the hindu population as "most wanton and unprovoked".[125] In a letter intercepted by the special branch of the criminal investigation department soon after the start of the insurrection, a leading member of the Kerala Khilafat committee, Muhammed Abdul Rahman, who also spent some time in Ernad in the early stages of the rebellion, commented that the Moplahs had "alienated Hindu sympathy" and that "even the Congress workers" had come to the conclusion

123 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, pp 49 and 169.

124 **Ibid**, p 3.

125 K. Madhavan Nayar, 4 January 1922, **Hindu**, 5 January 1922. p 3.

that "the military regime should not be ended soon for fear of Hindus being molested".[126] South India Congress leader C. Rajagopalachari noted that the actions of Moplah bands in Malabar had dealt hindu-muslim amity a "mortal wound".[127]

Nevertheless the Moplah rebellion, at least in its earliest stage, did not present the appearance of a communal rampage in which hindus were slaughtered wholesale merely as hindus. Indeed the total number of persons of **all** communities from the civilian population of Malabar estimated to have been killed by the insurgents during the rebellion amounted to only 500-600 in an area with a hindu population of several hundred thousand.[128] It would appear that, immediately after the beginning of the insurrection, the idea of the rebellion leadership in at least one place was to placate rather than antagonise the hindu population.[129] At this stage of the rising, Moplah participants were known to have sometimes declared the British and not members of the native population to be their quarry.[130] But whatever the rhetoric among some sections of rebel Moplahs at the start of the attempt to seize power in the "fanatic zone", the long and continuing tradition of seeking the resolution of grievance through the agency of communal solidarity ensured that, from the first, hindu participation in the new **Raj** would be on Moplah terms only.

No sooner had the power of the British government been extinguished in the **amsoms** of interior south Mala-

126 Muhamed Abdul Rahman to Yakub Hassan, 7 September 1921, Govt. of Madras, Under Sec.'s Safe, Secret, No 327-A, 2 November 1921, MRO.

127 Letter, n.d., **Hindu** (weekly), 15 September 1921, p 14.

128 Statement of Home Member, 13 November 1922, **Proceedings of Madras Legislative Council,** 3rd Session, Vol IX, No 1, p 468. The total number of hindus in the **taluks** wholly or partially affected by the rebellion were Ernad 163,328, Walluvanad 259,979, Ponnani 281,155 and Calicut 196,435.

129 Hitchcock, **loc cit,** pp 66 and 100.

130 **Madras Mail,** 8 September 1921, p 5.

bar than the residences of hindus of property were subjected to whatever exactions the local Moplahs chose to impose on them. The case of the raid on a rich Nair's mansion in Ponnani **taluk** on 22 August 1921 was typical of a multitude of such forays at that time. Five hundred local people, very largely Moplahs, came with arms in broad daylight to proclaim the 'Khilafat kingdom' and smash the Nair's portraits of the king-emperor and his consort. Dissatisfied with the Nair's contribution, which had been demanded from him, to the 'Khilafat', the mob looted the whole house, destroying what records and account books they could find.[131] Significantly, Moplahs of any property, unless known to be pro-British, nearly always escaped the attention of these early mobs. On the other hand, propertied hindus generally, even famous non-cooperators,[132] were visited.

A further characteristic of Moplah **Raj**, one which began to appear within hours of the beginning of the rebellion, threatened all non-Muslims without exception. On the very first day of the insurrection, 20 August 1921, two hindu motor drivers working for the government forces, on falling into the hands of the rebels near Tirurangadi were offered the choice of Islam or death.[133] This incident would appear to be the first example of what quickly became one of the ruling concerns of Moplah participants in the 1921-22 rising—the conversion of the inhabitants of rebel **Raj** to Islam. No official attempt was ever made to calculate the number of those forcibly converted during the rebellion. However, the estimates of those in closest touch with events in Malabar after 20 August 1921 suggest a minimum of 1000-1500[134] with an unknown number of hindus choosing death rather than conversion. Moplahs under the leader-

131 Judgement, Case No 4 of 1925, Court of Session, South Malabar, 24 January 1925, KDCA.

132 See above pp 190-91.

133 Hitchcock, **loc cit, p 39.**

134 **Ibid**, p 145. Note by F. B. Evans, 22 March 1922, MPP No 337, 15 April 1922, p 44, MRO.

ship of rebel Karat Moideen Kutti Haji were apparently responsible for some 500 conversions over a period of 15 days in the Arikkod area of north Ernad where a considerable proportion of the rebellion conversions took place.[135] Throughout the rebellion, but especially in its later stages, whenever hindus lay at the mercy of Moplah rebels, they were normally subjected to pressure, very often in the form of threat of death, to become muslims. Indeed it was the conviction of large numbers of Moplahs of the rebellion zone that in their Islamic **Raj** the only place for the Hindu was as a convert to the Mussalman religion. It became quite usual for Moplahs to approach hindus, those who had failed to escape the Khilafat regime, in the manner of K. Syed Muhammad Koya Kunikoya Thangal of Malappuram who on 20 August 1921 informed P. Sankunni Menon, the **adhigari** of Melmuri:

> "The British Government is finished: a Khilafat Government is established...There is now only one religion, Mahammedanism: you must embrace it."[136]

Before 1921 there had been a long tradition of Moplah zeal for proselytism in which considerations other than purely religious ones were of importance.[137] During the Moplah rebellion this tradition was continued in a way which made such considerations manifest. There would seem to be no doubt that, whatever its other sources, Moplah enthusiasm during the insurrection for converting hindus was rooted in the belief that proselytism promoted the war effort against British rule.[138] Thus, it was customa-

135 Statement of Karat Moideen Kutti Haji, 24 May 1922, Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 188.

136 Deposition of P. W. No 2, P. Sankunni Menon, Summary General Court Martial No 6 of 1922, Malappuram, 16 January 1922, MPP No 848 (Conf.), 1 November 1923, MRO.

137 See above p 88.

138 This seems to me a more convincing explanation of Moplah zeal for carrying out forcible conversions during the rebellion than the view of Stephen Frederic Dale (**Islam and Social Conflict: The Mappillas of Malabar**, 1498-1922, Ph.D thesis, Berkeley,

ry for rebels, when faced with the task of deciding how to treat non-muslims who were believed to have assisted the government forces in their operations against the insurrection, to see conversion to Islam as an appropriate means of dealing with such offenders. It may be presumed that for the Moplah rebel the honour of conversion was not viewed as suitable retribution for offences against the insurrection. Rather must the conversion of such 'malefactors' be seen as what was hoped would be a way of rendering them harmless. This interpretation receives support from the rebel mode of dealing with one Kuttath Raman Nair who, as an eye-witness to the murder of a British rubber planter, was a potential menace to those insurgents who were responsible. In fact, despite a majority opinion in favour of imposing the silence of the grave on the prisoner, after a heated discussion in a mosque it was decided that his expressed willingness to become a Moplah would be sufficient.[139] The concept of conversion to Islam as a means of denying to the government the aid of the non-muslim was occasionally made even more explicit. The family of one K. Krishnan Nair, for example, was apparently told by 50 Moplahs who raided his home in the course of the rising that if the household was "left without being converted" its members "would help the Military if they come".[140] Of course the use of proselytism to secure commitment to the insurrection was merely an extension of this prophylactic concept of conversion. Rebel leader Avvokker Mussaliar was one practitioner of this method of recruitment to the insurgent cause. It was his habit to have killed hindus declining conversion and to arrange for their co-religionists to witness the executions so that

1972, p 183) who refers to such acts as "a sort of dimly perceived ideological commitment".

139 Interview with Kuttath Raman Nair, Cochin, 13 September 1921, **Hindu** (weekly), 15 September 1921, p 14.

140 Deposition of P. W. No 5, K. Krishnan nair, 7 November 1922, Case No 186 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, Deferred Trial No 47 of 1923, pp 74-75, MHCA.

they might "tell future recusants what awaited them as he did not want more killed than he could help so as to have recruits against the Government".[141] For rebels like Avvokker Mussaliar, if not always for the forcible converts themselves,[142] conversion to Islam was clearly an oath of allegiance to Moplah **Raj**.

Nothing seems to demonstrate this fact more conclusively than the most remarkable phenomenon in the rebel campaign of proselytism—the 'conversion' of pro-government Moplahs. At the trial of rebel leader Ali Mussaliar, an anti-Khilafat Moplah trader, Nalakath Kunhi Pokkar, gave the following testimony of the rebel leader's address on Kunhi Pokkar's being produced before him after Moplah **Raj** had been proclaimed in Tirurangadi on 21 August 1921:

> "You deserve death. You have been against us for some time. Since you are born a Muhammadan, I do not kill you but you must repeat 'Kalima' and be taken into our fold."[143]

The constraining by Moplah rebels of pro-government muslims like Nalakath Kunhi Pokkar to repeat, as a means of recruiting them to the insurgent cause, the formula uttered on the occasion of the acceptance into the fold of Islam of a non-muslim would seem to exclude the possibility of the interpretation of Moplah zeal for conversion in terms of religion alone.

Confronted with a rising of a community with a re-

141 Deposition of P. W. No 4, Mokkath Chandappan, 8 November 1922, Case No 32 of 1922, Court of Senior Special Judge; Referred Trial No 182 of 1922, p 7, MHCA.

142 Late in the rebellion the Konara Tangal decreed the decapitation of all forced converts on the grounds that on escaping they gave valuable intelligence of rebel dispositions to the military (**Madras Mail**, 8 December 1921, p 6). However at least one hindu converted to Islam during the rebellion is on record as having played an active part in the rising subsequently (**ibid**, 23 January 1922, p 8).

143 Deposition of P. W. No 5, Nalakath Kunhi Pokkar, 7 October 1921, Case No 7 of 1921, Court of Special Tribunal, Calicut, exhibit 1 in Case No 151 of 1922, Court of Session, South Malabar; Criminal Appeal No 1493 of 1922, p 33, MHCA.

putation for fanatical hostility to the infidel, with their property from the first liable to the often arbitrary exactions of 'Khilafat' bands and themselves always exposed to the likelihood of conversion on pain of death, there was never any possibility of Hindus being won over to the Moplah rebellion. On the contrary, the terrified hindu inhabitants of the "fanatic zone", where they were unable to flee the Moplah **Raj** to government-controlled areas, tended to remain as unobtrusive as possible, anxiously awaiting the early reestablishment of British control. Moreover there is no doubt that, underlying the general hindu failure to support the rising, was an animosity which intensified as the course of the insurrection increasingly disclosed the character of the rebel **Raj**. It was not long after 20 August 1921 that the hindus of Malabar in general began openly to show their avidity for the punishment of the Ernad Moplah for his conduct during the attempt to seize power in the "fanatic zone". Most distasteful was the habit of groups of hindus at Shoranur, a railway junction to the south of the rebellion zone where many refugees had congregated and where the local feeling to Moplah rebels was reported to be "the reverse of cordial", of assembling outside the luggage vans which were commonly used for transporting Moplah prisoners out of Ernad to jeer at the inmates. On 19 November 1921, when an almost air-tight van carrying 100 convicted prisoners shouting desperately for water stopped at Shoranur, a crowd of hindus on the platform taunted them with expressions such as:

> "Sons of harlots. You have killed our countrymen, you deserve this" and "Have you not guns and swords? Are you not Khilafat people? Can you not take water by force?"[144]

144 Statements of witness K. V. Rama Ayyar, Goods Supervisor, Shoranur and Kalikarotee Koya Kutti Tangal, one of the surviving prisoners, 'Report of Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Death of Certain Mappilla Prisoners', L/PJ/6/1778, 1534/22, pp 24 and 28. The incident was the notorious train tragedy in which 70 of the 100 prisoners, 97 Moplahs and three hindus, were asphyxiated.

Under such circumstances, the advent of government forces in the different parts of the rebellion area was not infrequently the signal for demonstrations of relief, if not elation, on the part of the hindu inhabitants. Even as early as 21 August 1921, the train taking a party of police to the rescue of the collector's party in Ernad received the approbation of cheering crowds of hindu residents as it left Calicut.[145] On the same day, the collector's party, making its way under Moplah attack back to Calicut, was received with "extreme relief" by the inhabitants of a "friendly country" around Ariyallur, an **amsom** containing 2,356 hindus and only 341 muslims.[146]

Such manifestations of hindu support for the military commonly included the rendering of active assistance in the work of suppressing the rebellion.[147] Nor did the authorities fail to make use of this prevailing hindu sentiment of antagonism to the insurrection. On 3 November 1921 at a conference at which A. R. Knapp, the Martial Law Commissioner, met "leading citizens" of Calicut it was decided that in view of the critical situation in Malabar there should be recruited a citizen army of 800 through a committee of five prominent hindus.[148] The outcome was the embodiment in January 1922 of the Malabar Territorial Force consisting of two companies of Nairs and two of Tiers (including one platoon of christians), recruited mainly from the population of the rebellion zone. Far more important in the work of putting down the Moplah rising however was the well-armed corps known as the Malabar Special Police, the formation of which was proposed early in the rebellion and which from October 1921 played an important part in its suppression. The Malabar Special Police was

145 C. C. Tottenham, Supt. of Police, North Malabar in 1921, 'The Mapilla Rebellion and Malabar Operation 1921-22', n. d., **Police Papers** box 4, p 17.

146 District Magistrate to Govt. of Madras, 25 August 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham, (ed.), **loc cit**, p 70.

147 K. Madhavan Nayar, **Malabar Kalapam**, p 193.

148 **Madras Mail**, 4 November 1921, p 8.

a communal body, reminiscent of Captain Watson's "Nair Corps" of the beginning of the nineteenth century,[149] consisting wholly of hindu and christian ex-sepoys who were largely from the rebellion area, some having suffered personally at the hands of the insurgents. According to one source these military-style policemen were "thoroughly imbued with the spirit of revenge".[150]

Even so, the hindu thirst for vengeance on the Ernad Moplah was by no means solely expressed through the channels provided for the authorities. Wherever, in 'pacified' areas, or even in districts outside the rebellion zone, the hindu had the upper hand, any Moplah whether associated with the rebellion or not, was liable to misuse at the hands of the non-muslim civilian population. The Tier community in particular, broad sections of which even before the outbreak of rebellion had been ranged against the Khilafat movement in the name of support for the **Raj**,[151] was prominent in this harassing of Moplahs.[152]

Such manifestations of the general hindu opposition to the rebellion naturally ensured a further twist to the spiral of communal antagonism and played an important part in generating the insurgent violence against hindus which became increasingly frequent as the insurrection took its course. The complaint of the rebels that the hindus were helping the government side was easily translated into remedial action as communal violence. In October 1921, when the Konara Tangal first made his contribution to the rebellion, one of his injunctions was apparently that, since the troops were receiv-

149 See above p 112.

150 Lt.-Col. A.B.C. Mackinnon, 'The Moplah Rebellion, 1921-22', **The Army Quarterly**, January 1924, Vol VII, No 2, p 267. Mackinnon, as O/C 9th Gurkha Rifles, participated in the suppression of the rebellion.

151 See above p 158.

152 C.F. Andrews, 'The First Days of the Moplah Rising', **The Modern Review**, Vol XXI, No 4, April 1922, p 472.

ing assistance from the hindus, "none should be spared".[153] There can be no doubt that it quickly became the practice for the Moplah rebel to proclaim openly that the rising was directed against both the government and the hindu.[154]

Although acts of more or less indiscriminate rebel violence against hindus were liable to occur almost at any time and place during the rebellion they were most frequent in those areas where and at that time when hindu antagonism to the rising seemed of the greatest menace to the Moplah. Thus, in general, the worst cases occurred from the time the government forces began clearly to emerge as having the upper hand, that is from late October 1921, and in those areas, outside the heart of the rebellion zone (eastern Ernad), where hindus were still present in numbers sufficient to appear as a threat to the rebellion. It is these factors, not the "inherent vice and criminality of the Chernad ['Shernad', western Ernad] Mappilla",[155] which most reasonably explain the widespread cases of communal killing of hindus by Moplahs which occurred in western Ernad during November 1921. In the case of the repeated acts of rebel violence against hindus which were a feature of the insurrectionary campaign of the Konara Tangal in the eastern part of Calicut **taluk** and the adjoining areas of Ernad from late October onwards there may well have been a special factor. This was the fact that the communally-constituted Malabar Special Police was, from late October 1921, mainly responsible for the suppression of the rebellion in this region. Certainly, the Special Police were participants in the government operations in the Konara Tangal's own area of Chaliyapuram in

153 Deposition of P. W. No 16, K. P. Chappan Nayar, 19 March 1923, Case No 12 of 1923, Court of Special Judge, Calicut; Referred Trial No 44 of 1923, p 17, MHCA.

154 Depositions of P.Ws. Nos 2 and 3, K. Gopalan Nair and V. P. Koru, Summary General Court Martial, 2 January 1922; Case No 2 of 1922, Nilambur, MPP No 848 (Conf.), 1 November 1923, MRO.

155 Hitchcock, **loc cit,** p 82.

northern Ernad in which a mosque was raided and the Koran insulted and which precipitated the **Tangal**'s decision to join the insurrection.[156]

But despite the tendency for retaliation and counter-retaliation to generate communal violence, it must be stressed that, especially in the earliest stages of the rebellion, many instances occurred of Moplah rebels permitting apparently harmless hindus to go unmolested. Even as late as the third week of October 1921, in a rebel-controlled area like that between Pandikkad and Wandur in eastern Ernad, it was possible for rebel bands to stop isolated Nair travellers and permit them to pass unharmed in return for payment of one rupee for a "safe-conduct pass".[157] In the first days of the rebellion, when the Moplah was pre-occupied with the initial eradication of British power from interior south Malabar and before the spiral of communal violence and counter-violence had been set in motion, it was still possible in many places for hindus to be present as spectators of the work of destruction of government property. Indeed, at this stage of the insurrection, Moplah rebels were not always averse to permitting the participation of certain hindus in the benefits of the rebellion. Indigent hindus occasionally joined in the plundering of their wealthy co-religionists in the first days after 20 August 1921. Moreover, it is known that hindus were among the debtors of the Nambudiri Bank at Manjeri who received back their pledged valuables when rebel leader Kunhamad Haji effected that distribution at the start of the rebellion there.[158]

It must also be stressed that non-muslims were by no means the only victims of rebel violence. Any Moplah suspected of helping the government or even merely failing to respond to the rebel call for all Mussalmans,

156 **Ibid**, pp 79 and 137.

157 **Ibid**, p 67.

158 **Judgement**, Case No 128 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, 25 September 1922, **ibid**, pp 235 and 238.

or "the Moplah brotherhood (udapurappa)",[159] to come to the aid of the Moplah cause was almost certain to suffer on falling into the hands of the insurgents. Most notorious was the murder by men of Kunhamad Haji's gang on 30 August 1921 of retired police inspector Khan Bahadur Kurimannil Valiyamannil Chekkutti Sahib who had had the temerity to harbour government servants and hindus at his residence at Anakkayam, as well as to display on his gate a directive of the authorities that all arms were to be surrendered.[160] In fact, a considerable number of Ernad Moplahs fell victim to the rebellion in consequence of their failure to support it. If it was not rare for hindus the insurgents deemed harmless to the cause of Moplah **Raj** to escape rebel hands unmolested, it was positively the rule for Moplah backsliders to be called to account.

In this sense the observation of F. B. Evans, the special civil officer for the martial law area, that, at least in murder cases, the victims of the rebels were nearly always those who had supported the government or failed to help the insurgents,[161] carries a good deal of weight. The Moplah rebellion of 1921-22 was, for the most part, no irrational orgy of communal bloodletting. Even so, Evans' remark fails to take into account the fact that it was the assumption of the rebels that "fanatic zone" Moplahs would (if certain definite categories detailed above[162] are excluded) be supporters of the rising and that hindus, if not positively opposed to the insurrection, would at least be completely unreliable. Further, these assumptions, though very largely confirmed by the outcome of the rising, were not merely products of the experience of the rebellion but were rooted

159 Deposition of P. W. No. 1, Madhava Menon, 10 February 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, 4 April 1922, Case No 14 of 1922, MPP No 1003, 1 December 1922, p 36, MRO.

160 Hitchcock, **loc cit,** p 63.

161 Demi-official report of January 1922, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit,** p 284.

162 P 204.

in communal antagonisms pre-dating 20 August 1921 by not less than 129 years. Only these traditional antagonisms explain the fact that, as the Congress eye-witness K. Madhavan Nayar pointed out,[163] immediately after the outbreak of rebellion and before the advent of the military made it possible for hindus generally to render help to the government side, it was the property of hindus that was singled out for pillage, and that even before 20 August 1921 the call of the founders of the first Moplah **Raj** at Pukkotur had been for the death of all **kafirs**.[164]

That the **swaraj** the "fanatic zone" Moplah intended even before August 1921 was Moplah **Raj** was openly suggested in a notice in the name of Aminummanakath Parikutti Moulvi, the secretary of the Tanur Khilafat committee, which was distributed before the rising. This was couched in terms which must have given pause to even the most gullible victim of the Congress propaganda that the Ernad Moplah was a convert to the principles of hindu-muslim unity:

> "It is the bounded duty of all Muslims to endeavour in attaining Swaraj for all Muslims...and to non-cooperate with the other religionists who are enemies of our religion."[165]

As the district magistrate noted in March 1921 "the talk of hindu-muslim unity was nonsense and the main idea was the vision of **swaraj** and Malabar for the Mapilla and the Mapilla alone".[166] Certainly it soon became apparent with the outbreak of rebellion that the

163 Telegram, 4 January 1922 to **Hindu**, 5 January 1922, p 3.

164 Statement of Palakal Karunakara Menon, son of Kirathadasan, late Nilambur Tirumulpad, 10 August 1921, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit**, p 35.

165 Notice, 16 July 1921, MPP No 514 (Conf.), 15 August 1921, p 7, MRO.

166 Letter of 5 March 1921 quoted in extracts from fortnightly reports from Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, G.R.F. Tottenham (ed.), **loc cit**, p 4.

swaraj the Moplah insurgent fought for owed little to the national leadership of the non-cooperation movement. Indeed, when, soon after 20 August 1921, K. P. Kesava Menon, the secretary of the Kerala Congress Committee appealed to the Moplah mobs in Ernad for peace and order in the name of Gandhi, he was told that the Mahatma was a **kafir** and that they would never follow him. When they were appealed to in the name of the Ali brothers, the reply was that they would not follow those who followed a **kafir**.[167] During the rising the "cause of Islam" or "the Khilafat" in the name of which the rebels openly fought was, more prosaically, the cause of the Ernad Moplah and the setting up of a Khilafat Kingdom was understood to entail a **Raj** governed by the Moplah.[168] As the insurgents did not fail to proclaim, it was the Moplahs who had captured the "fanatic zone" and they were now the 'Kings'.[169]

To some extent it is possible to identify features of a vaguely 'Islamic' character in the Moplah **Raj** of 1921. There seems to have been quite a widespread idea among the insurgent population that alcohol should be prohibited under the new regime.[170] Some evidence also exists that ploughing on Fridays attracted the censure of the Moplah rebel.[171] On the other hand, the prohibitions and punishments of Moplah rule were by no means precise reflections of Islamic principles, even where they bore any relationship at all. Kunhamad Haji seems to have

167 T. Prakasam and T. V. Venkatarama Iyer, 'Report-on the Malabar Disturbances', September 1921, **Indian Annual Register**, 1922-23, Vol 1, p 829.

168 Deposition of P. W. No. 2, M. K. Achuthan Nayar, 19 July 1922, Case No 30 of 1926, Court of Session, South Malabar, referred Trial No 56 of 1926, p 4, MHCA.

169 Deposition of P. W. No 1, Karumarakadan Raman, Case No 2, Oorangattiri, n.d., MPP No 9 (Conf.), 5 January 1924, p 3, MRO.

170 Deposition of P. W. No 7, Thalappil Sekharan Nayar, 7 April 1922, Case No 48, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, Referred Trial No 51, p 13, MHCA.

171 Judgement, Case No 34 of 1923, Court of Session, South Malabar, 7 July 1923, p 3, KDCA.

decreed the cutting-off of looters' hands.[172] The "Khilafat code" proclaimed in the Chembrasseri Tangal's regime at Tuvvur was alleged[173] to have provided for the amputation of hands and legs, the gouging of eyeballs, burying in pits up to the neck and the battering of heads. In fact, there seems to be little evidence that such punishments were often carried out, if ever. On the other hand, certain Moplah rebels were found guilty by British courts of having, in the course of the rebellion, cut to death two Moplah prostitutes. The 'executioners', who were led by the Chembrasseri Tangal, are said to have proclaimed after the killings, that they had "strict statutes and most biting laws, under which any harlot's life fell into forfeit".[174] It is not surprising to discover that the fragmentary evidence which exists of the 'Islamic' character of Moplah **Raj** should indicate a state of affairs related to Islamic principles in only the most tenuous, and often the most distorted, fashion. As observed above,[175] the Ernad Moplah's understanding of the religion he professed was shaped both by ignorance and by what he conceived to be his own interests. Much the same can be said about his understanding of the "Khilafat cause".[176] This being so, it does not seem very profitable to seek the essential character of Moplah **Raj** in any model based on Koranic texts. The nature of the rebel regime is best seen in the context of the attempt of the insurgent population to deal with its social and economic grievances.

These had long concerned what the Ernad Moplah considered to be misuse at the hands of the British courts and administration. At one stroke, in the days imme-

172 Judgement, Case No 128 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, 25 September 1922, Hitchcock, **loc cit,** p 224.

173 By the local **adhigari** who escaped the rebel area, F. B. Evans, 'Notes on the Moplah Rebellion', 27 March 1922, MPP No 682, 22 August 1922, p 19, MRO.

174 Judgement, Case No 143-A of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut, 21 November 1922, Hitchcock, **loc cit,** p 275.

175 See p 58.

176 See above p 139.

diately after the Tirurangadi raid, all this seemed to have been eliminated. It was reported that, at about this time, in a speech to his followers, the Chembrasseri Tangal had promised them that in the future, under the new regime, there would be no **vakils** and "no expensive litigation". Moreover, the new method of administration would conform to traditional Moplah ideas of simplicity in organisation. "All the costly buildings and expensive machinery of administration which the Sirkar (had) invented" would be replaced by structures more suited to "the carrying out of our simple every-day routine work".[177]

No regime of Moplah justice in Ernad could fail to deal with the problem which was of such fundamental concern to the muslim rural population of interior south Malabar ever since the start of British rule—that of the power of the high-caste hindu **jenmi**. It is recorded that in one part of Ernad the local Moplahs began their rising with the statement: "We want only jenmis and amsom officials; we don't want to injure others".[178] Reports from Malabar at the beginning of the rising indicated that, from the first, talk of Khilafat **Raj** had been associated in the mind of the Ernad Moplah with freedom from the exactions of the Malayali landlords.[179] Indeed, the moment British authority was eliminated in the "fanatic zone" there disappeared with it the power of the **jenmi** to enforce any sort of demand on the Moplah rural community. Only in very few instances, such

177 Speech by the Chembrasseri Tangal, n.d., as reported by one who claimed to have been present when it was delivered. Own correspondent, Calicut, 10 October 1921, **Times of India,** 17 October 1921, p 10. The speech is also reproduced in P. C. Bamford, **Histories of the Non-Coopcration and Khilafat Movemcnts,** pp 175-76.

178 Deposition, P.W. No 4, P. Chathunni, 5 February 1923, Case No 77, Court of Special Judge, Calicut; Referred Trial No 47, p 13, MHCA. The area was that of Kizhuparamba in north Ernad. The Moplahs showed little respect for this intention.

179 Letter from an un-named Govt. officer, quoted in speech of Sir W. Vincent, 5 September 1921, **Council of State Debates (Official Report),** Vol II, 2nd Session, 1921, p 92.

as that of the Mankada **kovilagom** (palace), were **jenmis** able to rally enough dependents to its support to save it from the rebels until the British could return in force. The collapse of **jenmi** power brought with it a settling of accounts which was perhaps the most universal and spontaneous phenomenon of the rising. In almost every locality in the south Malabar interior the first impulse of almost the entire adult male Moplah populace was to proceed **en masse** to the residence of their big local high-caste hindu landlord, creditor and employer for the exercise of their newly-won ascendancy. In an orgy of nemesis every conceivable manifestation of **jenmi** hubris to Moplahs over the preceding epoch was repaid with interest in a matter of a few days following 20 August 1921. The Moplah raiding parties exacted as they pleased; humiliated where they thought fit; used violence when resisted, and, as a most radical expedient, denuded the countryside of their antagonists by driving them out. Only the widespread Moplah destruction of title-deeds, promissory notes and other legal paraphernalia had perhaps no very exact parallel in **jenmi** usage.

A typical example of the Moplah's handling of the **jenmi** came on 23 September 1921 before the special tribunal set up under the martial law regime and was widely reported in the Madras press. Immediately after the retreat of the collector's party from Tirurangadi on 21 August 1921 the residence at Muthoor, Ponnani **taluk**, of a big **jenmi**, Parameswaran Nambudiri, was visited by a crowd of 100-150 people of the locality, all, except for two or three Cherumar, being Moplahs and a good proportion tenants of the Nambudiri. Despite the prohibition on their entering the residence of a brahmin, the crowd forced its way inside, treating the inmates, including the females in purdah, with familiarity and contempt. Despite his prostrations the Nambudiri was beaten and looted, and documents relating to landed property, and money dealings of estimated value of Rs 10,000, were destroyed.[180]

180 **Madras Mail,** 24 September 1921, p 8.

In view of the murderous treatment of the **jenmi** during the long history of the Moplah outbreak it might appear remarkable that, despite every opportunity, the "fanatic zone" Moplahs refrained from killing more than a tiny handful of landlords in the few days the area was completely at their mercy after 20 August 1921.[181] This phenomenon is indeed extraordinary if the interpretation of the Moplah outbreak depends on the appeal to such unadorned agencies as 'fanaticism' and "homicidal mania".[182] On the other hand if, as argued above,[183] the bloodletting the outbreak entailed was part of a terrorisation of the dominant high-caste hindu, which was unavoidable in circumstances which permitted little other opportunity for challenging his ascendancy, the apparent complete destruction of that power would render murder a vanity. The entire history of the rivalry between "fanatic zone" Moplah and local **jenmi** power was one of a struggle over the control of local resources, basically the agrarian. For the short space of time, between the defeat of the collector's party at Tirurangadi and the return of the British government in force, these resources lay in the hands of the interior south Malabar muslim and the **jenmi** existed only on Moplah sufferance. For a fleeting moment of history the Ernad Moplah experienced almost complete victory in his struggle with the **jenmi**.

It is true that, after this initial stage of the Moplah

181 Malabar Magistrate to G.R.F. Tottenham, Under Sec., Govt. of Madras, 5 October 1921, MPP No 1086 (Conf.), 27 December 1922, p 2, MRO. It is not correct to say (Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., 'Peasant Mobilization in Malabar: The Mappilla Rebellion 1921' in Robert I. Crane, ed., **Aspects of Political Mobilization in South Asia**, p 87) that landlords were the "Principal victims" in the killings of hindus by Moplahs during the rebellion. In the first few days of the rising the great majority of **jenmis** fled the rebellion zone and returned only after the Moplahs had been crushed. It is true that a number of **jenmis** who did remain behind were killed during the rebellion. However, they must have been a small minority of the total number of hindus killed.

182 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, p 10.

183 Chapter 1.

rising, the few **jenmis** who remained in the rebellion area became increasingly liable to murder at the hands of the rebels. To some extent this is explicable in terms of the increasing insurgent hostility to hindus as a whole as the rebellion took its course. As non-muslims with a very definite background of allegiance to British **Raj** the Nambudiri or Nair **jenmi** was an obvious assassination target for a movement increasingly concerned with the elimination of all potential support for the government in the south Malabar interior.[184] On the other hand, the murder of **jenmis** after the earliest stage of the rising must in certain cases be traced directly to agrarian disputes. One instance seems to have been the slaughter on 14 November 1921 of almost the entire household of a wealthy landlord of Nannambra, along with the destruction of his registered documents, promissory notes and vouchers of unsecured debts, by a gang of Moplahs. These were tenants of the **jenmi** with whom they had a record of litigation and ill-feeling.[185] The collapse of Moplah hegemony and the advancing threat of victory of the power which had always sustained the authority of the **jenmi** would naturally dictate a method of dealing with the landlord in a fashion other than that which left him and his family intact with the chance of regaining his old ascendancy. The murder of **jenmis** was always a resort of desperation in the face of massive British power, whether in the outbreak period or in the final stages of collapse of the 1921-22 rebellion.

Location

The rebellion of 1921-22 represented the Moplah rural dweller's attempt to carry through a definitive solution

184 For instances of murders best explained in this light see statements of Karat Moideen Kutti Haji, 24 May 1922, Hitchcock, loc cit, p 188 and of Abuvoker Musaliar, 9 August 1922, **ibid**, p 197.

185 Judgement, 17 February 1922, Case No 116 of 1922, Court of Special Judge, Calicut; Referred Trial No 37 of 1923. pp 1 and 3, MHCA.

to the problem of British-supported high-caste hindu ascendancy. In consequence, the insurrection was sustained by the local population only in those places where a muslim agriculturalist population of considerable size was confronted with **jenmi** power at its greatest. The rising was never at any stage an urban phenomenon. Of the 1,570 rebels imprisoned in Bellary Camp during 1921 no less than 80 per cent were returned as "engaged in agriculture and with animals",[186] a figure higher than the proportion of the total Moplah population of Malabar pursuing such occupations.[187] The large Moplah population of Calicut, though by no means generally enthusiastic about British rule, and though under some pressure from rebels from outside the town to participate in the rising, never in fact did so. The Moplahs of Ponnani town, though they had made it a centre of the Khilafat agitation before 20 August 1921, were so unwilling to countenance insurrection that a party of leading citizens, both Khilafat and anti-Khilafat, were able at the outset to turn away the insurgents from the town. Nowhere, even in the rural areas of the most over bearing landlordism, where Moplahs were few did the rising find local sustenance. Despite the absence of physical barrier or adequate military force the rebellion failed to spread into such largely hindu rural tracts as southern Walluvanad and Palghat **taluks**. The dynamo from which all the energy of insurrection was generated was located in the traditional "fanatic zone" of Ernad, northern Walluvanad and the adjoining parts of Ponnani **taluk** where the most acute Moplah-**jenmi** antagonism had produced outbreak after outbreak over a preceding period of some eight or nine decades.

In fact the "rebellion zone" of 1921-22 coincided very nearly with the old "outbreak zone" except in a few

186 Report on Administration of Jails, Madras Presidency, 1921, ML (G) P No 1588, 27 June 1922, pp 30-31.

187 In 1921 60.3 per cent of Malabar Moplahs were definitely engaged in agriculture. 61.5 per cent of the total Malabar population was supported by agriculture.

districts (most notably the eastern part of Calicut **taluk**) which overlapped into those rural areas, identified above[188] as coastal and northern Malabar, with a considerable proportion of Moplahs but where the **jenmi** stood out less clearly as an oppressor. It was in the coastal and northern parts of rural Malabar, where, even if he faced it less disadvantageously than in the "fanatic zone", the Moplah agriculturalist still confronted **jenmi** power, that during the period 1836-1919 there was always the possibility of Moplahs occasionally[189] being infected with the 'fanatical' spirit which produced outbreaks so frequently in Ernad. Under these circumstances the chance of the 1921-22 rebellion spreading beyond the bounds of the "fanatic zone" was always greatest in the case of those rural areas, heavily populated with Moplahs, which were contiguous with the initial zone of insurrection. Indeed the beginning of the rising in the south Malabar interior was accompanied by clear signs of rural Moplah unrest in the coastal strip of Ponnani **taluk** and to the north of Ernad. In the event, no locally sustained challenge to British rule materialised in these areas until in October 1921 Karat Moideen Kutti Haji and the Konara Tangal fomented the rebellion in the eastern parts of Calicut **taluk**.[190] Although this was one of those rural areas in which Moplahs whilst forming a

TABLE TO SHOW THE HIGH PROPORTION OF MUSLIMS IN THE AMSOMS OF CALICUT TALUK CHIEFLY INVOLVED IN THE 1921-22 REBELLION[191]

1	2	3	4	5
Amsom	Hindus	Muslims	Total	Percentage, Col 3 to Col 4
Kodayattur	603	2553	3156	81
Koduvalli	590	1898	2488	76

188 See p 77.

189 For examples see above p 19.

190 Hitchcock, **loc cit**, pp 80, 86 and 153. See map p 235.

191 Govt. of Madras, **Census of 1921: Village Statistics, Malabar District, Madras Presidency**, pp 2-6.

Kudattayi	373	567	940	60
Pannikod	1049	1085	2134	51
Pulakkod	1527	1032	2559	40
Puttur	1213	1845	3058	60
Vavad	771	1826	2597	70

high proportion of the inhabitants, had rarely perpetrated 'fanatical' outbreaks,[192] there can be no doubt that the local muslim population here willingly participated in the attempt to establish Moplah rule in the face of the power both of the **Raj** and the **jenmi**. This was, indeed, the same area in which the riot by "Khilafat Moplahs" at Kizhakkot had been staged against local hindus in March 1921.[193] At the same time, just as the Kizhakkot Moplahs had found the ministrations of a "fanatic zone" **Mussaliar** necessary before openly challenging local authority, the Moplahs of eastern Calicut **taluk** generally were only induced to rebel under the influence of external prompting. Such a drastic challenge to authority as insurrection was offered by the eastern Calicut Moplahs only when stimulus and even leadership, was provided from outside. The encouragement came from the Moplah **Raj** which had already been established with no outside direction in that part of Malabar which for so long had been the stronghold of resistance to the government and the powerful high-caste hindu—Ernad **taluk**.

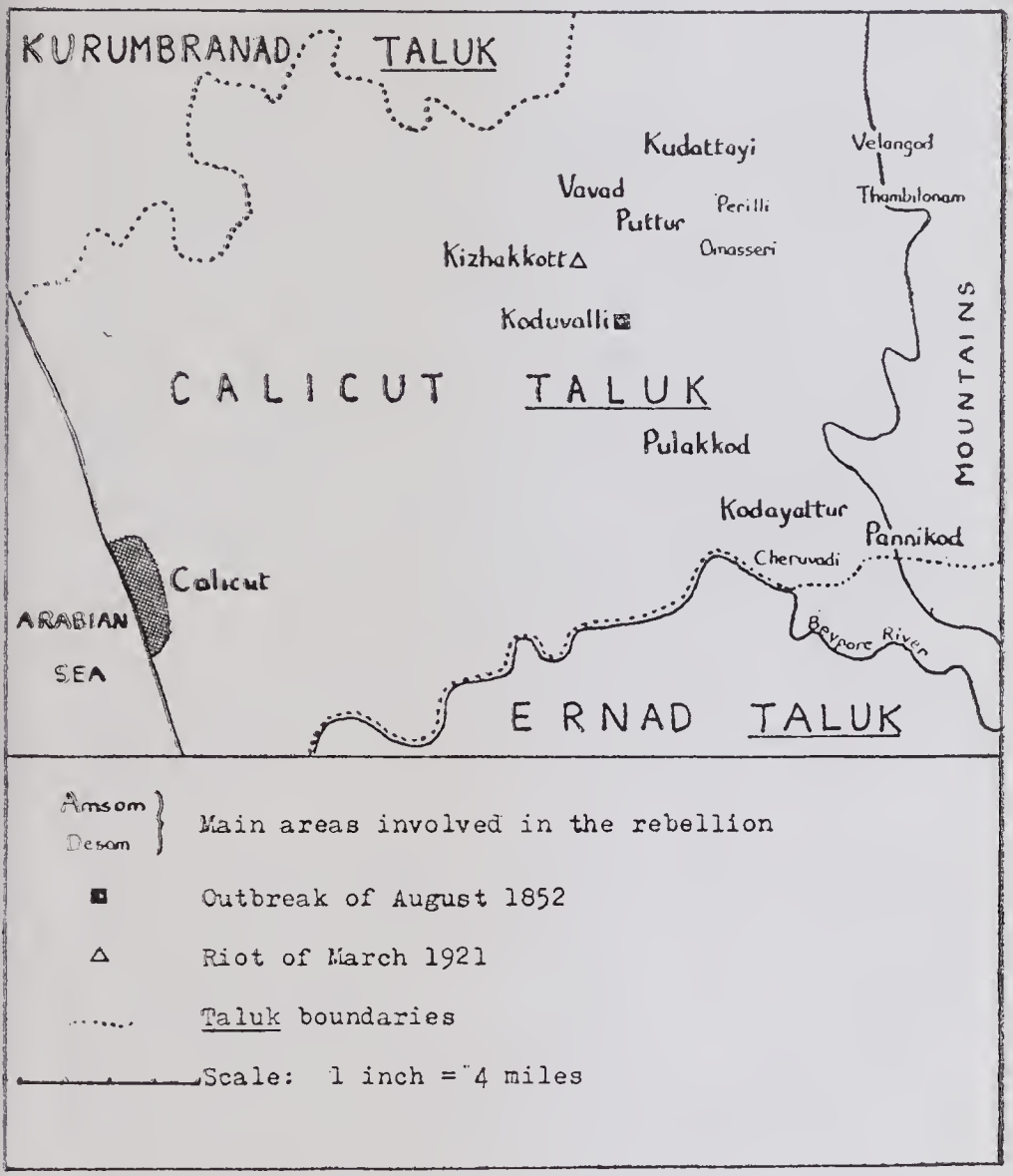
Conclusion

Every salient characteristic of the rebellion of 1921-22 demonstrated its shaping by traditional Ernad Moplah patterns of mobilisation. These patterns had been dictated by local circumstances hostile to extensive organisa-

192 The one occasion was the Koduvalli outbreak of August 1852.

193 See above p 151. Some Kizhakkot Moplahs later played a prominent part in the rebellion, though the **amsom** itself was apparently not involved.

MAP TO SHOW THE AREA OF CALICUT TALUK INVOLVED IN THE 1921-22 REBELLION*



* Main source of information Hitchcock, loc. cit., pp. 79-80 and 127-34; statement of Palakkamthodi Abuvoker Musaliar of Puttur amsom, Calicut taluk, 9 Aug. 1922, ibid., pp. 197-98.

tion on a regular and methodical basis. The Ernad Moplahs were a community lacking the wider, secular means of contact available to the social groups forming the leadership of the non-cooperation movement. Preparation consisted very largely of an emboldening incitation, which, at the crucial moments in the progress towards insurrection, at Pukkotur on 1 August 1921 and at Tirurangadi on 20 August 1921, drew on the traditional appeal of Moplah solidarity. Organisation was most efficient within the narrowest localities between which the attempted co-ordination depended on the claims of a communal identity. Leadership was parochial in its scope and priestly in its legitimacy. Support was confined within the boundaries of community. Prosecution was increasingly responsive to the infatuations of prejudice at the expense of the dictates of calculation. Location was not so much the domain of exceptional landlord power as the area of Moplah numerical strength. The Malabar rebellion of 1921-22 was the rising of disadvantaged interior south Malabar Islam.

Conclusion

From at least as early as the time when Sir Thomas Munro as commissioner in Malabar had expressed his conviction that the lower orders "always follow the impulse given by their superiors",[1] the tendency to look upon the lowly muslim rural-dweller of Ernad as a mere pawn had constantly recurred in the reflections of officialdom on the problem of the Moplah. When the low rural Moplah perpetrated his 'fanatical' outbreak against high-caste hindu power, it was because his spiritual 'master', the **Tangal**, or his immediate secular 'overlord', the big **kanamdar** intermediary, was manipulating him.[2] When the possibility of rebellion by the same subordinate Ernad Moplahs was considered in 1880, it was rejected as impossible without the supply of the supposed absence of leadership and organisation.[3] When 1921 saw the lowly Ernad Moplah rise in his tens of thousands against the **Raj**, it had to be, for some officials, a result of the machinations of the priesthood and/or Congress conspiracy.[4]

This recurring inability to appreciate that the lower-order Ernad Moplah, besides having very material grievances of his own, was quite capable of mobilising in the attempt to resolve them, certainly tended to vitiate official interpretation of Moplah violence. It also might therefore handicap British attempts to frame policies adequate for the task of preventing such turbulence. The tendency in the mid-nineteenth century of official ra-

1 See above p 63.

2 See above pp 45 and 60-61.

3 See above p 98.

4 See above pp 171 and 198.

tionale of the violence in Ernad to postulate a perverse fanaticism of the lower-order Moplah, fomented by the priesthood and directed by the more substantial Moplah laity, resulted in punitive policies which, whilst making Moplah outbreaks less frequent, could not totally prevent them. Only when the threat of rebellion in 1880 resulted in the enquiries which produced the measures of 1887-1900, designed to give wide sections of the rural subordinate a degree of legitimate defence against the landlord, did Moplah violence cease until such a time as the bulwark of legislation had been breached by **jenmi** counteraction. The resumption of outbreaks in 1915 seemed however of insufficient menace to induce a reassessment of official policy to agrarian relations in Malabar by the administration. It seems that it was the idea in 1917 that it was the **jenmi** rather than the tenant who was the key to political safety in Malabar which prevented the government of Madras acceding to the pressure for agrarian reforms in favour of the tenant which might have forestalled insurrection four years later.[5]

The 1921-22 rebellion occurred not because non-cooperator or other manipulators had provided a blueprint of insurrection to organise Moplah 'fanaticism'. It occurred because the Ernad Moplah, with grievances unresolved, because the administration was prepared to take his subordination for granted, had for long been waiting for a sign of the collapse of the power which sustained the **jenmi**, and in August 1921, the omens seemed sufficiently clear that the moment of opportunity had arrived. The blossoming of organisational talent that marked the removal of British authority in the south Malabar interior after 20 August 1921 was a demonstration that the inferior Ernad Moplah was no mere object passively available for external manipulation. It is true that rebel organisation could be of substance at only a parochial level over which mere suzerainty was the aspiration. Even so, the organisation and leadership of the 1921-22

5 See above p 22.

rebellion, whilst highly localised in character, was by no means ineffective and was certainly an indigenous accomplishment. The fact that Moplah rebels not uncommonly saw themselves "Khilafat people" and their rule as "Khilafat **Raj**"[6] was no indication that the rising owed anything much more to the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement than some symbols and the trigger to insurrection of the belief in victory. What it did signify was the identification of the insurgents with a community Islamic in definition.

But the fact that the disadvantaged Ernad Moplah could mobilise without external support only via the community of religion rather than through purpose-built organs of struggle could be an impediment to the resolution of his anti-**jenmi** grievances. The fact that the Ernad disturbances of 1915 seemed directed against the apostate and the rule of the 'infidel', rather than against the **jenmi** did not help those who afterwards argued for legislation in favour of the tenant.[7] The fact that the leadership of the movement which in 1921 precipitated the Ernad Moplah's rebellion, as a result of that leadership's own partly antagonistic relationship with the Moplah, failed to provide the more modern methods of organisation which he so patently lacked was of paramount importance in the defeat of the 1921-22 challenge for power. Whilst meeting with intoxicating success against both government and the **jenmi** in its initial stages, the insurrection could not extend beyond the area in which Moplahs were numerous, even within which the non-muslim section of the population generally shrank in aversion from a regime to which they might easily fall victim. The very means of organising defiance of authority, dependent as it was on a rallying to the call of communal solidarity, was one guarantee of the isolation which in the end proved fatal to the Moplah rebellion.

But although, as an attempt to establish Moplah **Raj**

6 See above p 216.
7 See above p 137.

the rebellion proved abortive, there are grounds for supposing that the rising of 1921-22 was not entirely a failure in the context of the attempt of the Ernad Moplah to resolve his traditional grievances.[8] Though it might be asking too much to expect official confirmation of the fact, it seems reasonable to suppose that the fact of the Moplah rebellion having occurred influenced official response to the pressure for agrarian reform which had been evident since before the rising. In 1930 official assent was given to a Malabar Tenancy act which represented the first step to curb **jenmi** power taken by the authorities since the legislation of 1887-1900, itself the product of a preceding history of Moplah violence.

In fact, the Moplah rebellion of 1921-22 proved to be a major turning point in the history of the south Malabar Moplahs. Members of this community had organised acts of violence against **jenmi** and British rule almost from the time of the first establishment of the latter in 1792. This tradition had culminated in the attempt to seize control of the "fanatic zone" by armed force in 1921-22. The complete failure of this attempt was a lesson which the Ernad Moplah was not quick to forget. Never again, in the remaining 25 years of British rule was he responsible for the violence of outbreak or rebellion even though the problem of high-caste hindu power persisted to the end of this period. However, in the years after 1921-22[9], the appearance in south Malabar of new peasants' organisations, trade unions and political parties presented the Ernad Moplah with new means of attempting to deal with his grievances, means which were a viable alternative to those which had plainly become obsolete in 1921-22.

8 I would not agree with Stephen Frederic Dale (**Islam and Social Conflict: The Mappillas of Malabar, 1498-1922**, Ph.D thesis, Berkeley, 1972, p 185) that the Moplah Rebellion was "completely futile".

9 A recent work (Roland E. Miller, **Mappilla Muslims of Kerala**), by a missionary who has worked in Kerala for a considerable number of years, deals interestingly with Moplah history in the decades after the 1921-22 rebellion.

APPENDICES

1

INTERVIEWS MADE USE OF IN THIS WORK

1 *Date*	2 *Place*	3 *Medium*	4 *Person Interviewed*
1. 20 March 1974	Wimbledon	English	SIR THOMAS AUSTIN, sub-divisional magistrate, Malappuram in 1921. Cut off in Malappuram by rebels 20-26 August 1921. Afterwards active in the suppression of the rebellion.
2. 21 August 1974	Guildford	English	E. H. COLEBROOKE, in charge of rubber estate at Karuvarakundu for 8 months before the rebellion at the outbreak of which he escaped over the Nilgiris. Served with the Malabar Special Force in the suppression of the rebellion from October 1921.
3. 6 December 1974	Kozhikode	English	JENAB A. MUHAMMED SAHIB, originated from Vadakkekad, south Ponnani *taluk*. In 1921 at 19 years old, was Congress secretary of Kottayam *taluk*, north Malabar where he organised Khilafat and non-cooperation committees. Was a student delegate at Ottapalam conference, April 1921. Arrested in Calicut 27 August 1921. Was in contact in Cannanore jail with rebellion participants like Kunhi Qadir of Tanur. After release engaged in administering Congress relief work in rebellion zone.
4. 11 December 1974 & 17 December 1974	Kozhikode	English	K. P. KESAVA MENON, born 1886 in Palghat *taluk*, a member of Palghat Rajah's family. Trained at Bar in

1	2	3	4
			England. Joined Congress 1915. Started practice as lawyer and politician. Secretary of Calicut Congress and Home Rule League. Was secretary of Kerala Congress when non-cooperation started. 3 weeks before rebellion went to preach non-violence in Tirurangadi after receiving report that local Khilafat Moplahs making arms. At 22.30 hours 19 August 1921 heard that collector's party had left for Ernad. Sent Muhammad Abdul Rahman, secretary, Kerala Khilafat committee into Ernad. 21 August 1920 himself visited Kondotti and Tirurangadi areas. Soon after, with collector's permission went to Tirurangadi with 24 Congress workers to try to persuade Ali Mussaliar to surrender. Failed. Returned same day to Calicut.
5. 14 December 1974	Mambram	Malayalam via translator	A. P. KUNHAHAMED, native place Kolappuram, close to Mambram. 21 years old in 1921. Cultivated 3 acres paddy land on *verumpattom* directly under *jenmi*. Participated in Khilafat movement but not a member. Was one of Ali Mussaliar's volunteers. Was in one of the mobs which attacked collector's party at Tirurangadi, 20 August 1921.
6. 15 December 1974	Tirurangadi	Malayalam via translator	K. MOIDEEN KUTTY, native place Tirurangadi where residing 1921. 18 years old 1921. Khilafat volunteer and Congress member. 1921 his father was timber trader and he helped. Was taken under arrest by collector's party from Tirurangadi to Calicut, 21 August 1921.
7. 21 December 1974	Tirurangadi	Malayalam via translator	M. K. HAJI, native place Tirurangadi. 16 years old 1921. Was one of Ali Mussaliar's volunteers in 1921. Had "no

				occupation". June 1921 left for Madras for employment.
8.	21 December 1974	Tirurangadi	Malayalam via translator	CHELUPADAN MOHAMMED, native place Tirurangadi where was seller of Moplah literature in 1921. Then 20 years old. With father was a Khilafat volunteer. Present in Tirurangadi at time collector's raid. Participated in fighting against troops at Tirurangadi, Pandikkad and Vengara during rebellion. Father shot dead by troops.
9.	21 December 1974	Just outside Tirurangadi	Malayalam via translator	KAZUNGUNTHOTTATHIL EVAMUTTI, native place Tirurangadi where was important cattle dealer. 54 years old in 1921(!). Brother was Khilafat member but not himself. Thought it "would not be beneficial". Not for or against it. Brother shot though not a rebellion participant.
10.	23 December 1974	Kakkad, Tirurangadi	Malayalam via translator	P. UNNEEN, native place Vengara. Was teashop keeper in 1921.
11.	23 December 1974	Malappuram	Malayalam via translator	SADHU P. AHAMED KUTTY, native place Malappuram. Was 10 years old in 1921. Father Kunhahamed took refuge in Malappuram barracks on outbreak of rebellion because pro-British. Family originally a commercial one, came from Calicut 200 years ago and took *kanam* land in Malappuram area. Father 30-35 years old in 1921, native of Malappuram. Had 2 acres *kanam* land (paddy) under *jenmi* Para Nambi. Cultivated himself and with labourers. Family had had more property but reduced by sub-division in father's time. Father also trader in paddy and cloth.
12.	23 December 1974		Malayalam via translator	N. CHECKU, native place Munduparamba. 22 years old in 1921. Labourer. Sympathiser with Khilafat agitation. Helped destroy communications at start of rebellion. Jailed for 2 years for looting.

1	2	3	4
13. 23 December 1974	Melmuri	Malayalam via translator	N. KUNHALAVI HAJI, native place Melmuri. In early teens in 1921. Father was cultivator of 15 acres paddy and garden land. Some *jenmom* land but mostly kanam land held from Manjeri *kovilagom,* Tamarasseri Nambudiri and Para Nambi. Land not leased out but cultivated with labourers. Father supported Khilafat movement but not a volunteer. Uncle was appointed president Khilafat committee in Melmuri. Saw father and sister taken from house and shot by British troops in rebellion.
14. 27 December 1974	Vellangad	Malayalam via translator	VARIANKUNNATH AHAMED, native of Vellangad. 17 years old in 1921. Khilafat movement activist. Son of rebel leader Variankunnath Kunhamad Haji's brother.
15. 27 December 1974	Pandikkad	Malayalam via translator	C. P. MOIDEEN HAJI, native of Vellangad, but in 1921, when was 25 years old, in Pandikkad. Became servant to military in 1921, before which was contractor in road building, hiring labourers. Had been passive Khilafat movement supporter. Father was agricultural labourer.
16. 27 December 1974	Pandikkad	Malayalam via translator	K. T. ALAVI, native of Anakkayam, but lived in Pandikkad in 1921 when was 22 years old. Shared 2 bullock carts with his 3 brothers. Supporter of Khilafat agitation and appointed member of local Khilafat committee, though it held no meetings.
17. 28 December 1974	Manjeri	English	MANJERI KARNOPAD was student in Calicut when rebellion broke. The local Manjeri rajah.
18. 28 December 1974	Anakkayam	Malayalam via translator	T. K. KAMMUNNI, native of same area. 25 years old in 1921. Cultivator of 2.7 acres paddy land held from Manjeri

				Karnopad on *panayam* (mortgage). Cultivated with Cherumar labourers and his own labour. Attended Manjeri conference, May 1920. Khilafat activist. Arrested for participation in attack on Manjeri Treasury in August 1921.
19.	28 December 1974	Anakkayam	Malayalam via translator	K. M. MAHOMED HAJI, native of Anakkayam. 21 years old primary school-teacher in 1921. Son of a cultivator. Supporter Khilafat agitation. Present at Variankunnath Kunhamad Haji's distribution of pledged valuables at the Nambudiri Bank at Manjeri in August 1921. Did not participate in rebel hostilities.
20.	1 January 1975	Parappanangadi	Malayalam via translator	A. E. ANANDAN MENON, native of Parappanangadi. 25 years old in 1921, process server in local Munsiff's court. *Kanamdar* family. Witness to start of rebellion in Parappanangadi. Accompanied collector's party part of way from Parappanangadi to Calicut but left because of attacks on them. Spent rest rebellion period in home area.
21.	1 January 1975	Parappanangadi	Malayalam via translator	M. GOVINDAN MENON, native of Parappanangadi. 25 years old in 1921, *amin* in local Munsiff's court. *Kanamdar* family. Witness to start of rebellion in his locality.
22.	18 March 1975	Adyar, Madras	English	C. KARUNAKARA NAIR, personal assistant to district superintendent of police Hitchcock during rebellion and working with same in Malabar police force March-May 1921. Responsible for maintenance of rebellion records. 1923-24 in Madras prosecuting rebellion cases in High Court.

2

SUMMARY OF PUTATIVE OUTBREAK PLOTS AND QUASI-OUTBREAKS

Date	*Location*	*Victims*		*Participants*
		Caste	*Class*	
3 October 1850	Puliyakkod (Ernad)	1 Mussad (brahmin)	*Jenmi*	4 ('thwarted' by arrest)
5 January 1852	Cavaye (north Malabar, later Cherikkal *taluk*)	1 Nair	*Jenmi*	5 ('thwarted' by arrest)
28 February 1852	Melmuri and Kizhumuri (Ernad)	1 Nair	*Jenmi* and moneylender	16 ('thwarted' by arrest)
14 May 1852	Tirurangadi area (Shernad)	1 Nair	*Peon,* slave-owner & substantial land-owner	3 ('thwarted' by arrest)
11 September 1857	Ponmala (Ernad)	1 Nair	Rich & of "good family"	8 ('thwarted' by arrest)
7 September 1865	Nemini (Walluvanad)	1 Nair	Moneylender	3 (attempted to conceal crime; arrested)

Date	Location	Victims		Participants
		Caste	Classes	
27 March 1877	Irumbuzhi (Ernad)	1 Nair	Unknown	5 ('thwarted' by arrest)
20 June 1879	Paral (Walluvanad)	Intended victim not known		7 ('thwarted' by arrest)
4 March 1884	Chembrasseri (Ernad)	1 Pattar (brahmin)	*Jenmi*	2 ('thwarted' by arrest)
18 June 1884	Kizhumuri (Ernad)	1 Tien	Cooly	3 (attempted to elude authorities after commission of crime; captured)
24 February 1894	Pathakara (Walluvanad)	1 Tien	Unknown	12 ('thwarted' by arrest)
1 November 1915	Thekkumpat (Ernad)	1 Tien	Wealthy cultivator	2 (attempted to elude authorities after commission of crime; captured)

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(From front flap)

that the challenge to British rule which the Moplah rebellion represented was a consequence of the impact of that power on social relations in rural Malabar starting with the earliest period of British control over that area.

Conrad Wood (born at York on 21 February 1942) was educated at and holds a Master of Arts degree from Cambridge, a Diploma of Education from Hall and a Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degree from London.

He was in India from November 1974 to May 1975 collecting material for his PhD thesis. At present as a Deputy Keeper, Department of Sound Records, Imperial War Museum, London, he is working on the oral history programme.

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